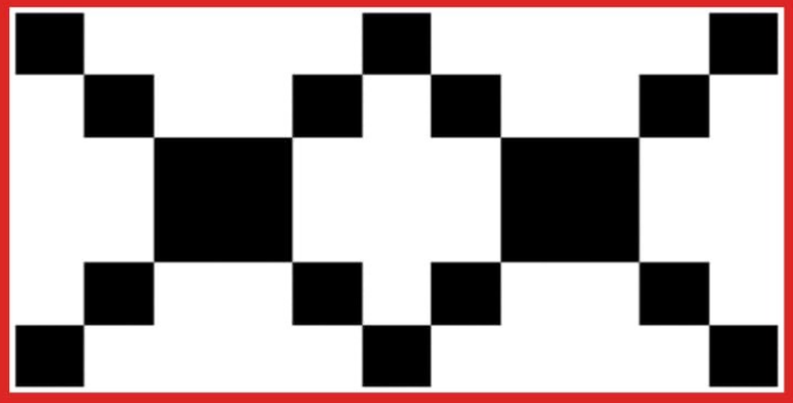
GADAA SYSTEM

Heritage of Humanity

Deribie M. Demmeksa



"One of the most complex systems of social organization ever devised by the human imagination"

Professor Donald Levine

"One of the most astonishing and instructive turns the evolution of human society has taken"

Professor Asmarom Legesse

Gadaa System is an integrated system of the Oromo nation of East Africa. It is the zenith of all-inclusive thoughts, an ace of balanced social stratification, and an epitome of popular democracy, pure republicanism and minimalist government. This book emphasizes on the socio-political aspects of the Gadaa System and discusses its institutions, constitution, democratic and federal characteristics, and its many centuries of practices by the Oromo nation. The Oromo are the ancient Kush, the single largest indigenous nation in East Africa.

Deribie Mekonnen Demmeksa was born in Oromia, Ethiopia. He studied at Jimma University and Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia, at Swiss Management Center in Switzerland, and at the University of Vechta in Germany. He was a lecturer, among others, at the University of Gondar and at the University of Vechta.

ISBN 9781658028837

90000

9 781658 028837

GADAA SYSTEM

Heritage of Humanity

Deribie Mekonnen Demmeksa
Horten, Norway
2020

ISBN-13: 978-1658028837

Bibliographic Information

Title: Gadaa System
Subtitle: Heritage of Humanity
Author: Deribie Mekonnen Demmeksa
Year of Publication: 2020
Place of Publication: Horten, Norway
Publisher: Independently published
ISBN-13: 978-1658028837
Language: English
Length: 285 pages

Abstract

Gadaa System: Heritage of Humanity is a comprehensive scholarly introduction to the Gadaa system, the indigenous socio-political, legal, and constitutional order of the Oromo nation of East Africa. Recognized by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity, the Gadaa system represents one of the most sophisticated forms of popular democracy, republican governance, and constitutionalism developed outside the Western canon. The book systematically explains the institutional foundations of Gadaa, including age-sets, Gadaa-grades, constitutional principles, assemblies, leadership structures, and mechanisms of power transfer. Drawing on Oromo oral traditions, historical records, comparative political theory, and the author's lived experience within the system, the study presents Gadaa as an integrated political, legal, cultural, and moral order rooted in collective governance and rule of law. Designed as an accessible yet rigorous work, the book addresses the long-standing absence of comprehensive introductory literature on Gadaa for both local and global audiences.

Keywords

Gadaa system; Indigenous governance; Oromo political system; African democracy; Republican governance; Indigenous constitutionalism; Age-set systems; Political anthropology; African political thought; Heritage of humanity

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments
Preface
Introduction
Chapter 1. Gadaa Age-Sets and Gadaa-Grades
Chapter 2. Gadaa Constitution
Chapter 3. Gadaa System: A Republican and Federal System
Chapter 4. Gadaa System in Practice: Past and Present
Appendix: Abbaa Gadaas of Boorana Oromo (1457–2025)
References
Index

Author Information

Deribie Mekonnen Demmeksa is an independent scholar, political analyst, and author. He specializes in Ethiopian politics, federalism, constitutional governance, Gadaa System, political history of Ethiopia, and political economy of indigenous governance, including the Gadaa system. He holds a doctorate degree in Political Economy and has lectured at universities in Ethiopia and Germany. He currently resides in Oslo, Norway.

Peer Review Statement

This monograph underwent independent scholarly review by subject-matter experts prior to publication. The manuscript was revised in response to substantive academic feedback to ensure analytical rigor, coherence, and scholarly contribution.

Citation Information

APA:
Demmeksa, D. M. (2020). *Gadaa system: Heritage of humanity*. Horten, Norway.

Chicago:
Demmeksa, Deribie Mekonnen. *Gadaa System: Heritage of Humanity*. Horten, Norway, 2020.

MLA:
Demmeksa, Deribie Mekonnen. *Gadaa System: Heritage of Humanity*. 2020.

Rights and Access

© 2018 Deribie Mekonnen Demmeksa.

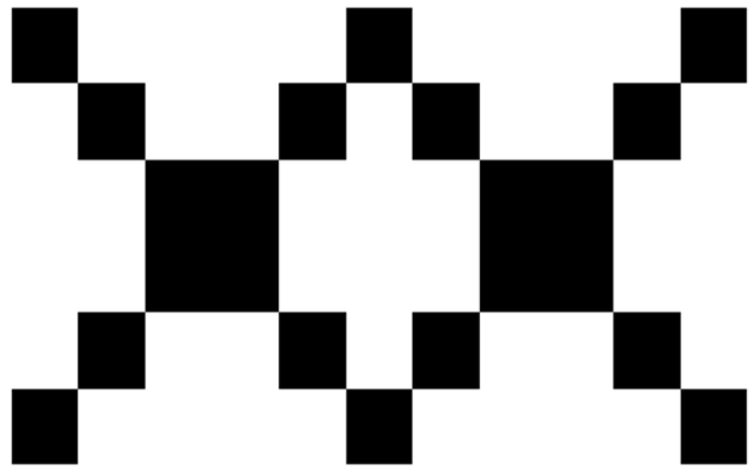
Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0).

GADAA SYSTEM

GADAA SYSTEM

HERITAGE OF HUMANITY

Deribie Mekonnen Demmeksa



Horten, Norway

Copyright © 2020 by Deribie Mekonnen Demmeksa

Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0).

First Edition

ISBN-13: 978-1658028837

Inquiries and comments may be sent to demmeksa1@gmail.com

In memory of

Tigist [Tigest] Fiseha Andeto

02.10.1983 [11.10.1981] — 05.06.2013

To

Ol and **Kenna**, with love**.**

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments iii
Preface IV
Introduction VII

Chapter 1: Gadaa Age-Sets and Gadaa-Grades 1
1.1. Introduction 1
1.2. Age-set-based Care, Roles, and Responsibilities 14
1.3. Gadaa-grade-based Rites, Roles, Responsibilities 23
1.4. "Right Born," "Early Born," and "Late Born" 65
1.5. Gadaa Cycles 79
1.6. Summary 85

Chapter 2: Gadaa Constitution 91
2.1. Introduction 91
2.2. Gadaa Principles According to Asmarom Legesse 94
2.3. More Gadaa Principles 105
2.4. Summary 128

Chapter 3: Gadaa System: A Republican and Federal System 131
3.1. Introduction 131
3.2. Gadaa System, an Invention of the Oromo 135
3.3. Structure of the Gadaa System 137
3.4. The Complex Concept of Gadaa 154
3.5. Attempts to Define Gadaa or Gadaa System 160
3.6. The Legalistic Culture of the Oromo 165
3.7. The Democracy of the Gadaa System 174
3.8. Gadaa Democracy & Western Democracy: Some Comparisons 175
3.9. Some Limitations of Gadaa Democracy 201
3.10. Summary 204

Chapter 4: Gadaa System in Practice: Past and Present 209
4.1. Introduction 209
4.2. How old is the Gadaa System? 213
4.3. The Practice of Gadaa System in History 217
4.4. Present Practice of Gadaa System: An Example 232
4.5. Endurance of the Gadaa System 235
4.6. Summary 242

Appendix: Abbaa Gadaas of *Boorana* Oromo: 1457–2025 248
References 251
Index 259

List of Tables and Figures

Tables

Table I.1 *Qubee, phonemes, and examples in English words* X
Table 1.1 *Gadaa Age-Sets* 5
Table 1.2 *Age-sets and Gadaa-grades for ideal "right born" without staggered succession* 9
Table 1.3 *Examples of alternate usage of names of Gadaa-grades* 11
Table 1.4 *Passage rites in staggered succession* 26
Table 3.1 *Duration of Gadaa-grades in a four year and a five year staggered succession* 189

Figures

Figure 1.1. Age-sets of Gadaa System 3
Figure 1.2. Historical Gadaas of the generation of fathers and sons 6
Figure 1.3. Illustration of ascents and descents of Gadaa-grades 8
Figure 1.4. Gadaa-grades and age-sets 12
Figure 1.5. Two Election Periods to Elect Abbaa Gadaa 48
Figure 1.6. Staggered succession and alternating years of Caffee and Baallii 55
Figure 1.7. "Early-born," "right-born" and "late-born" in a four-year staggered succession 67
Figure 1.8. Illustration of the right period of birth and Gadaa Grades in genealogical three generations 73
Figure 1.9. Established parties and their succession cycle 80
Figure 1.10. Succession cycle of both generations of Gadaas 81
Figure 1.11. Staggered successions of Gadaa Grades (Gadaas of the generation of fathers (ᚣ) and the generation of sons (ᚤ)) 82
Figure 1.12. Grandfathers (GF), fathers (F), and sons (S) in Gadaa-grades 83
Figure 1.13. The Stages of other Gadaas when one Gadaa (party) is in power 84
Figure 1.14. Simplified illustration of Gadaa cycles within cycles 85
Figure 3.1. Higher Assemblies of the Oromo Nation 139
Figure 3.2. Constituents of Caffee, local polity 140
Figure 3.3. Structure of Oromo Polity 147
Figure 3.4. Structure of Gadaa Council of Boorana 151
Figure 3.5. The Process of Gumii (Caffee) of Boorana Oromo 171
Figure 3.6. Vertical and Cross cutting structures of Gadaa System 185
Figure 3.7. Classes of Raaba & Gadaa in a staggered succession 190
Figure 4.1. Structure and composition of Gadaa Councils of Boorana 234

Acknowledgments

Many people have contributed their part, both directly and indirectly, in making this work a success. I would like to thank them all. Specifically, I would like to thank Abera Fayisa, Admasu Nadew, Alemnesh Benya, Almaz Shiferaw, Ararsa Edosa, Ashenafi Erenso, Asnakech Regassa, Berhanu Erenso, Dereje Zewde, Emanuel Eba, Firaol Muktar, Fireselam Teklemariam, Fikirte Shiferaw, Gadisie Erenso, Gezahegn Abera, Gizachew Ashagrie, Hailu Guta, Naol Erenso, Obsetan Erenso, Sena Erenso, Tadelech Kebede, Tariku Atomsa, Muktat Osman, Kedir Mohammed, Kefyalew Ayana, Lensa Taye, Rahel Yohannes, Sintayehu Erenso, Woinishet Tadesse, Yemaneberhan G., Yonas Erenso, Zewdu Amde from Ethiopia, USA, Norway, and Sweden for their moral support during the difficult years the study was undertaken.

I would also like to thank Aksel Bjune, Anne-Sloot Bjoru, Annemik Snaphan, Arne Kvernvik Nilsen, Eliann Holtung, Friedbert Ottacher, Gaby Middlbeck, Gunnar Sørby, Hans E. Olav, Henriette Lehmann, Hilde Beate Tørnby, Isabelle Dutard, Jon Magnus, Karl Johnny Solberg, Lise Løndal, Monika Råvm Julikssen, Øyvund Lunde, Solveig Tenden, Tor Arne Bårnes, Monica L. Kalsen-Ravlo, Per Christian Riise Ophus, Thor Inge, Tina Malén Hansen, Tom Binder Kalvik, Tommy Sundstrøm, Trine Dalen, and Uve Mellert from Austria, Germany, Netherlands, and Norway for their technical and moral support.

I am grateful to Univ. Prof Dr. theol. habil. Prof. h.c. Egon Spiegel of the University of Vechta for his continued support, even at challenging times.

My exceedingly special thanks go to Edom and Moa for their patience and understanding.

Galata Waaqaa!
Deribie Mekonnen Demmeksa
August 27, 2018
Horten, Norway

Preface

By taking the challenge of writing this book, I have learned immensely more about the Gadaa System. From the time I achieved self-consciousness to date, I have been a student of the Gadaa System, but I learned more about it in the last five years. What I had known about the system came from the fact that I am a native Oromo: I belong to the System. I have observed multiple Gadaa ceremonies since my childhood: admiring, marveling, questioning, learning, and analyzing. These were not enough to fully understand the Gadaa System. I have recognized that the Gadaa System is a school that one joins at the age of eight but graduates at eighty. The reason I took the audacious initiative to write this book was, thus, not that I was the conventional authority on Gadaa System but because I wanted to know more. Through the process of the systematic study of the Gadaa System and the writing of this book, I have asked people who knew aspects of the system; I have studied the readily available literature. Also, I have conducted rigorous analysis during the last three years. These years of systematic study of the Gadaa System have enabled me to better understand it. The entire process of writing the book was a greater understanding of the Gadaa System that worth all the effort.

Even so, what I have understood has not made me the authority to singlehandedly write about Gadaa System on behalf of the Oromo nation. The work can only be a comprehensive introduction to the Gadaa System, written for all-purpose readers. The inventors and the source of genuine knowledge and wisdom on the Gadaa System are the Oromo people in general. I cannot stand for them all nor is Gadaa System a subject that could be imparted at once by one individual. Gadaa System is a collective wisdom of the Oromo nation to which one could only become a lifetime student. This book, therefore, could only be considered a faint shadow of the profound knowledge about the Gadaa System that is among the great Oromo nation of East Africa.

Nonetheless, I can share what I have learned and understood thus far for the advancement of knowledge and understanding of the Gadaa System. I may do so in a more organized and structured manner that could facilitate uniform understanding. From the start, I intended to share what I have known about the Gadaa System with everyone. It was also my wish of all time that every competent Oromo imparts knowledge about the Gadaa System with everyone. If every interested Oromo does so, the entire world will learn about it. It is my understanding that not very much knowledge about the Gadaa System has been made available to the public so far on the international stage, even as introductory work. It is also my accepting that there is not yet a uniform understanding of the Gadaa System, not even among the not so many Gadaa scholars. Both suggest that there is a pressing need to build a standardized body of literature that would be accessible to everyone.

The primary aim of this book is, thus, to contribute to the groundwork on the standardization of literature, which could be accessible to everyone interested, in the Gadaa System. I intend to encourage both traditional and modern Oromo scholars to commit to the development of standardized comprehensive literature on the Gadaa System. Also, it is an invitation for the new generation of Oromo people who reside in big cities and abroad separated from their traditional communities to educate themselves more about their unique socio-political system and enlighten the rest of the world about it by sharing the readily available standardized knowledge about it. Besides, it is also an invitation extended to the Gadaa scholars to make the scholastic fragments of knowledge about the Gadaa System more of a public knowledge by adapting it for general-purpose readers and school textbooks. In this regard, I hope this book would serve very well as an introductory textbook.

I envisage seeing that there would soon be a comprehensive knowledge base, an extraordinary collection, about Gadaa System. Achieving this vision may seem to be shooting for the stars, for now. A few decades later, the standard collection could be ready for the entire world: everyone would acquire standard and uniform knowledge about this true 'heritage of humanity' from that knowledge base. In the humble process of authoring the book, my effort was only marking the beginning of what, I believe, could become a comprehensive knowledge base on the Gadaa System. I am very humbled to have contributed an exceedingly small part in this regard. I hope

that others would build upon it. A very humble contribution towards that vision, *Gadaa System: Heritage of Humanity* is here. Everyone is invited!

I hope that the book shall soon be available in multiple Ethiopian languages (Amharic, *Afaan Oromoo*, Tigrigna, Somali, etc.) and other languages (Kiswahili, Hausa, Arabic, etc.). I chose the English language because the written resources at the international level were available in that language, and it is the preferred language for the dissemination of knowledge about the Gadaa System globally. A secondary consideration for the choice was that it could be easier to translate to other languages. Otherwise, being in the state of restricted liberty, it was challenging to write the book singlehandedly in a second language, unaided. Within the applicable laws and conventions, I would like to kindly invite competent translators to translate the book to any germane language.

Deribie Mekonnen Demmeksa
May 31, 2018
Horten, Norway

Introduction

This book is about the Gadaa System. Gadaa System is an indigenous and democratic socio-political system of the Oromo nation of East Africa. It is a UNESCO inscribed heritage of humanity. It is "one of the most astonishing and instructive turns the evolution of human society has taken" (Legesse, 1973, pp. xxx, 50), and "one of the most complex systems of the social organization ever devised by the human imagination" (Levine, 1974, p. 132). Broadly speaking, Gadaa System is the zenith of integrated social, political, cultural, and spiritual thoughts, and the epitome of popular democracy, pure republicanism, and minimalist government.

The Oromo are pioneers in constituting a full-fledged popular democracy and pure republican form of government in Africa. Based on written history, the Oromo had enjoyed the republican system of government for centuries before the founding of the USA. Gadaa System entered Abyssinian recorded history in the 16th century. By then, it was fully developed and fully functional; so much so that the uninterrupted republican Gadaa governments that it formed every eight years by popular elections defeated successively the Kingdom of Abyssinia throughout the 16th century. Based on oral literature of the Oromo nation, it could be contemporary to Athenian democracy or forty-eight centuries old. Further studies may reveal how old the system is. For now, we know the Oromo had fully functioning popular democratic political system and republican form of government at least two and half centuries before the formation of the USA.

Even though Gadaa System has existed for centuries as a full-fledged republican democratic system, little has been known or understood about

this 'intangible heritage of humanity' not only by the West but also by Africans, including by some Oromo who owns it. Few Westerners have known it since the late 16th century in its understated and undermined form. In the late 19th century, European writers who have lived and traveled in the Oromo countries reintroduced it in a more elaborate yet diminished form. Since the late 20th century, few scholars have introduced it to the world in highly focused academic works. The sophistication that Gadaa System had achieved by the beginning of the 16th century and its continued practice, including under state repression for a century, has marveled the few social and political scientists who have studied it. Yet, it has remained little known and little understood indigenous African socio-political system at the world stage.

This could be partly because of the complexity of the System itself and the lack of formal introductory works for both local and global audiences. Gadaa System is a complex and integrated socio-political system where just the name Gadaa could impart multiple concepts. The Oromo overcome the complexity through lifetime learning. Even Oromo people, who practice it, hardly understand it fully until middle age. It could be more difficult for non-Oromo to understand it because of a lack of practice absence of formal school lessons on it nor are enough works available to the public in international languages. Close examination of the available works (in the English language) on the Gadaa System, reveals that the works are either very brief descriptions, incomplete or highly focused on specific issues. Thus, they are narrow in scope and very academic. Except for highly instructed people or scholars, the average reader finds it difficult to understand them. There has been no comprehensive introductory work on the Gadaa System that aims to help average readers, both Oromo and non-Oromo, understand what Gadaa System is and how it works.

The existing literature on the Gadaa System is not publicly available for general-purpose readers. The available disjointed literature on Gadaa System is intended for scholarly consumption and kept in the domain of academic stock. This has compounded the challenge of understanding the Gadaa System for the novice. This must-have also hindered the dissemination of knowledge about the Gadaa System and the public access to it. Similarly, it might have stalled the possible adoption of the noble ideals of the Gadaa System by other societies. This is particularly so for those who have not yet grasped its fundamental principles, structures, and institutions. One of the

main aims of this book is to tackle this problem by making the fundamental knowledge about the Gadaa System available to general-purpose readers.

The book is written comprehensively. It builds on the existing analysis and descriptions of the Gadaa System and integrates it with interviews of a few key informants and personal experience of the writer. It draws on the recent academic works, records of European travelers, missionaries, explorers, and religious and secular records of the kingdom of Abyssinia, the accounts of interested Oromo and non-Oromo Ethiopians, the Oromo oral traditions, on the information obtained from consulted knowledgeable persons, and on the personal experiences of the writer. The writer, an Oromo and presently at *Luba* stage of the Gadaa System, the sixth Gadaa grade, brings lifetime experiences of Gadaa System, close observation of some Gadaa practices, and some interesting analyses into the equation. Besides, the book offers easy and simplified explanations and illustrations about the Gadaa System. It is based mostly on the practice of the *Boorana* Oromo of southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya. The practice of the Gadaa System among the *Gujii, Karrayyuu, Arsii, Maccaa, Tuulamaa,* and *Ituu* and *Humbanaa* Oromo are also referred whenever necessary. This writer chose the practice of Gadaa among *Boorana* as the foremost illustration of the Gadaa System because it is believed to be the most authentic and the most studied version of the Gadaa System. According to the chronology of their *Abbaa Gadaa*s, the *Boorana* polity (a political entity) has been practicing Gadaa System uninterrupted for over half a millennium.

In the book, key *Afaan Oromoo* words or phrases (and few sentences) are given in their *Afaan Oromo* using *qubee*, the alphabet of *Afaan Oromoo*. They are given in italic to distinguish them. *Afaan Oromoo* has ten vowels divided into five short and five long phonemes. Single and double vowels stand for the short and the long phonemes, respectively. The latter group is not an independent *qubee* but as an elongated phoneme of the first. Doubled the *qubee* stands for geminate consonant phonemes. Both "length" of the vowel phonemes and geminate of the phonemes determine meanings. *Afaan Oromoo* has six digraph phonemes. Paired *qubee* represents them. They are *ch* [ʧ] (palatal, affricate), *ny*[ɲ] (palatal, nasal), *ph* [pʼ] (bilabial, ejective), *sh* [ʃ] (palatal, fricative), and *dh* [ɗ] (alveolar, implosive). In geminate digraphs, the first *qubee* is double. Three consonantal phonemes (*c* [tʃʼ] (palatal, affricate), *q* [kʼ] (velar) and *x* [tʼ] (alveolar)) differ from their English version. A symbolic

separator [ʔ], akin to apostrophe (') in English language but known as *hudhaa* [hʊɗaː] in *Afaan Oromoo*, stands for a glottal stop in writings.

Table I.1 shows the *qubee* (Oromo alphabets) and their respective phonemes according to the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). The sounds of *Qubee* are represented in the underlined sounds of the English language examples.

Table I.1

Qubee, phonemes, and examples in English words

Vowels (*Dubbachiiftuu*)									
A	aa	E	ee	I i	ii	O	oo	U	uu
[ɐ]	[ɑː]	[ɛ]	[eː]	[ɪ]	[iː]	[ɔ]	[oː]	[ʊ]	[uː]
s*u*m	d*a*m	*e*xam	*a*gent	*i*f	t*ee*th	*o*ffer	b*oo*ring	s*u*it	m*oo*n

Consonants (*Dubbifamaa*)													
B	C	Ch	D	Ɗ	F	G	H	J	K	L	M	N	Ny
[b]	[tʃʾ]	[ʧ]	[d]	[ɗ]	[f]	[g]	[h]	[ʤ]	[k]	[l]	[m]	[n]	[ɲ]
*ba*g	Close to very hard *ch*	*ch*ur*ch*	*da*m	hollowed and implosive *d*	*f*act	*G*od	*h*appy	*j*udge	*c*an	*l*amp	*m*an	*n*ow	Like Italian sig*n*ore

P	Ph	Q	R	S	Sh	T	V	W	X	Y	Z	'	
[p]	[pʾ]	[k]	[r]	[s]	[ʃ]	[t]	[v]	[w]	[tʾ]	[j]	[z]	[ʔ]	
*p*urpose	Very hard and explosive *p*	Like very hard *k* in *Q*ur'an	*r*ust	*s*and	*sh*arp	*t*axi	*v*irus	*w*ax	Very hard but dental *t*	*E*urope	*z*ap	Like glottal stop in Qur'an	

Note: Adapted from http://www.omniglot.com/writing/oromo.htm

The following glossary illustrates the transliterations of Oromo words and phrases using *qubee*.

1. *Aadaa* [aːdaː] — culture; customs and culture
2. *Abbaa Alangaa* [ɐbbaːɐlɐngaː] — prosecutor general.
3. *Abbaa Duulaa* [ɐbbaːduːlaː] — commander in chief of army.
4. *Abbaa Gadaa* [ɐbbaː gɐdaː] /*Abbaa Bokkuu* [ɐbbaːbɔkkuː] — an elected executive of the Gadaa government; head of the Gadaa government at the local, regional or pan-Oromo level.

5. *Abbaa Seeraa* [ɐbbaː seːraː] — Chief Justice, Justice; judge; memorizer of the laws.
6. *Abbaa Muudaa* [ɐbbaː muːdaː] — head of the Oromo spiritual institution, leader of the *Qaalluu*.
7. *Aduulaa* [ɐduːlaː] — elected leaders of *Kuusa* and *Raaba*.
8. *Baallii* [baːlliː] — insignia of power in the form of the best of ostrich feather, token symbol of authority of the Gadaa government; staggered succession.
9. *Buttaa* [bʊttaː] — a ceremony that precedes power transfer.
10. *Caffee* [tʃʾɐffeː] — the Oromo national assembly of the multitude; Oromo legislature.
11. *Dabballee* [dɐbbɐlleː] — the first Gadaa grade.
12. *Daannisa* [daːnnɪsɐ]— Fatherhood ceremony
13. *Dhaloota* [ɗɐloːtɐ] — 'those who beget children'; the period between *Daannisa* and *Maq-baasa*; the right time to beget a child.
14. *Foollee* [foːlleː] — a ritual song; song and dance group of *Qondaala*, the third Gadaa grade.
15. *Gadaa* [gɐdaː] — the sixth grade of the Gadaa; republican democracy; a form of government; etc.
16. *Gogeessa* [gɔgeːssɐ] — political party, Gadaa party
17. *Gosa* [gɔsɐ] — tribe or clan; ethnic group.
18. *Hayyuu* [hɐjjuː] — elected leader/councilor; scholar, expert, guru/sage, enlightened; legal experts; justices.
19. *Heera* [heːrɐ] — Gadaa constitution.
20. *Hiriyaa* [hɪrɪjaː] — age-sets membership group.
21. *Ilaaa-fi-ilaamee* [ɪlaː-fiː- ɪlaːmeː] — facts-and-premises.
22. *Ittimakoo* [ɪttɪmɐkoː] — second grade of Gadaa.
23. *Itti makoo* [ɪttɪ mɐkoː] — initiate/inductee to a Gadaa party.
24. *Irreesaa* [ɪrreːsaː] — ritual leader; Oromo thanksgiving.
25. *Kuusa* [kuːsɐ] — fourth grade of Gadaa.
26. *Luba* [lʊbɐ] — the sixth grade of Gadaa; one of the genealogical generations of Gadaa.
27. *Maq-baasa* [mɐkʾbaːsɐ] — naming ceremony.
28. *Maxxaarrii* [mɐtʾaːrrɪː] — add-ons to another *luba*.
29. *Miseensa* [mɪseːnsɐ] — members of a Gadaa grade.

30. *Odaa* [ɔdaː] — a giant sycamore tree; a consecrated assembly place of Oromo legislature.
31. *Qaalluu* [kʼaːlluː] — hereditary spiritual leader.
32. *Qondaala* [kʼɔndaːlɐ] — third grade of Gadaa grades.
33. *Raaba* [raːbaː] —fifth grade of Gadaa, before *Daannisa*.
34. *Safuu* [sɐfuː] — Oromo moral economy; an applied philosophy of all-inclusive ethics; "natural laws" of the Oromo.
35. *Seera* [seːraː] —law(s).
36. *Waaqa* [waːkʼɐ] — the One God of humanity, the supreme divine being.

The target audience of the book is average readers, both Oromo, and non-Oromo. It is organized in such a way that readers first get to know about the basics of the Gadaa System: age-sets and grades. Then, build gradually their understanding of the System starting with an introduction to its constitution and fundamental institutions. This is followed by the discussion of its democratic, republican, and federal characteristics. Finally, the readers shall have an overview of the practice of the Gadaa System both from past and present perspectives. Reasonable repetitions and recapitulations are included as reminders and to aid beginner students of the Gadaa System for easy following. Simple and two-dimensional illustrative figures and a few basic tables help better understanding. Figures that are accompanied by extensive notes could be useful for the expediency of understanding and framing and visualization of the discussions throughout the reading. Understanding them is crucial to understand the Gadaa System.

The book has an introduction and four chapters. The chapters and the sections of the chapters are numbered for easy reference and follow up. The *Introduction* introduces the Gadaa System, its inventors, the intended purpose of the book, and its audience. Also, it introduces the *qubee* (Oromo alphabets) and their respective phonemes, the transliteration of *Afaan Oromo* terminologies, and glossary.

Chapter 1 presents a detailed description of the institutions of age-sets and Gadaa-grades. In the former, the emphasis is given to the age-based care, (social, economic, military) roles and responsibilities, especially for those from age zero to forty. In the latter, the political inductions, initiations, and passage rites, Gadaa ceremonies, election, power transfer, and retirement are emphasized. Also, the chapter provides illustrations on the effects of time of birth on the Gadaa-grades and the several Gadaa cycles. It is written

assuming that the reader has no prior information or knowledge about the Gadaa System. It tries to establish the fundamental elements of the system on which the subsequent discussions in the remaining chapters would be built. Hence, it is detailed but basic. It is only towards the end of the chapter that readers encounter the concepts of "right born," "late-born," and "early-born," which may appear slightly complex but very important to understand the System fully.

Chapter 2 is about the Gadaa Constitution. In this chapter, the eighteen Gadaa Principles that have been identified by Professor Asmarom Legesse are summarized. Another thirty-two Gadaa principles are identified and discussed. In total, fifty Principles (constitutional articles/provisions) are identified. The list fulfills the famed maxim of Oromo oral literature that affirms the number of articles of the constitution is fifty and the number of articles of the laws of the Gadaa System is five hundred and fifty: *"Heerri shantama; seerri dhibbashaniifshantama!"* The principles, however, may not be universal among the Oromo both in the naming and subject of focus. The writer has noticed significant variations during the process of collecting them. This shows only that there is an opportunity to improve on them. Nonetheless, the identified principles (articles of the oral constitution of the Gadaa System) afford a truly clear outline of the unyielding constitutional foundation of the Gadaa System.

Chapter 3 introduces the Gadaa System as a republican System that has been invented by the Oromo nation. It expounds on the structure of the Gadaa System and the complex concept of Gadaa. It tries to define the Gadaa System comprehensively. It illuminates the legalistic and legislative culture of the Oromo. Also, it attempts to illustrate how the Gadaa System (Gadaa Democracy) outshines the classical Democracy of the West in some respects. Finally, it highlights the limitations of the Gadaa System.

Chapter 4 discusses the Gadaa System in practice. It recapitulates the journey of the Gadaa System, albeit briefly. It discusses the various claims on how old the Gadaa System is. Besides, it elaborates on the challenges that the Gadaa System has been through in its long history. It also presents testimonies of Abyssinian and Western records on the practice of the Gadaa System among the Oromo nation. These testimonies are presented in historical epochs. An abridged example of the practice of the Gadaa System among the *Boorana* Oromo of southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya shall be employed to illustrate current practices. The chapter also highlights the

status of the Gadaa System in this 21st century. It emphasizes that the Gadaa System, "an indigenous democratic socio-political system of the Oromo," has now become a unique heritage of humanity. Advanced readers may find starting from this chapter helpful.

Every chapter begins with a broad *Introduction* and ends with a concise *Summary*.

Chapter 1

Gadaa Age-Sets and Gadaa-Grades

1.1. Introduction

Gadaa[1] System is a complex system. It is a system of multilayered subsystems and their institutions. It is an eight-year age-sets and Gadaa-grades based system. At the same time, it is also a forty years genealogical generation-based system. Furthermore, it is a fixed five-party and dual moiety system. It is an age-sets-based system because age-sets stratify the whole society into eleven successive eight-year intervals, except the last that covers the entire life above eighty years of age. Based on biological age, every Oromo belongs to one of the eleven age-sets at a time. It is a Gadaa-grade-based system because all members of the parties (*Gadaa/gogeessa*) of the system pass through eleven eight-year grades. At birth, every Oromo joins a grade five grades below that of his father's grade. It is a genealogical generation-based system because it separates the *Gadaa*s of the generation of the fathers and the Gadaas of the generation of the sons by fixed forty years. It is a five-party system because there are five established political parties in the system that come to power in orthodox succession. Every Oromo ought to be a member of one of the five parties. Children are born into the parties of their fathers. The parties stratify the society fairly and equitably across the

kinship structure by keeping the natural balance of population and demography. Only one-fifth of the population could belong to one party and just one-eleventh of that could belong to a given Gadaa-grade or age-set at one time. It is a dual moiety system because it stratifies the society vertically into two halves based on kinship relationships. The eleven age-sets, the eleven Gadaa-grades, the two genealogical generation-sets, the five parties, and the dual moiety systems have their respective institutions and are intricately interrelated. They, together, form the building blocks of the Gadaa System. This chapter shall explicate the age-sets and Gadaa-grades.

1.1.1. Age-sets

Age plays a key role in every society. Traditional age-based organizations, including political ones, are common among peoples of Africa. The age-set system, in general, is prevalent among the Kushite nations of Horn of Africa, the largest of which is the Oromo nation.

Age plays a key role in the Gadaa System. The Oromo have institutionalized age to age-sets[2]. Sometimes, writers refer to the age-sets as age-grades. The age-sets are one of the fundamental elements of the Gadaa System. They are based on age. Progression from one age-set to the next is followed by specifically defined social, cultural, political, economic, military, and spiritual roles and responsibilities. It takes place at the same time every eight years. Respective members of the age-sets pass through the same proscribed initiation, roles, and responsibilities.

Gadaa System assumes that an Oromo man could live up to three genealogical generations: generations of sons, fathers, and grandfathers. This is a total of 120 years: 40 years of growth and development, 40 years of maturity and active life, and 40 years of full retirement and old age. Indeed, the Oromo live longer. Reclus (1890) observes, "Centenarians are by no means rare" (p. 40) among the Oromo. However, it is not common that they live up to 120 years, at least not at present.

In general, there are eleven age-sets in the Gadaa System. They are from ages 0–8, 8–16, 16–24, 24–32, 32–40, 40–48, 48–56, 56–64, 64–72, 72–80, and above 80. Every age-set is an eight-years chronological interval, except for the last one.

Theoretically, the last age-set spans from 80 to 120 years of age. However, the number of people who belong to this extended age-set would

not be much more than that which belongs to the preceding regular age-set. This is because the natural death rate would accelerate at this age-set. As a result, demographically, the number of people who might belong to the last expansive age-set could not be out of proportion from those who belong to the earlier age-set. It appears that the Oromo traditional scholars had realized this and allowed this age-set to extend to include every Oromo who could live up to 120 years.

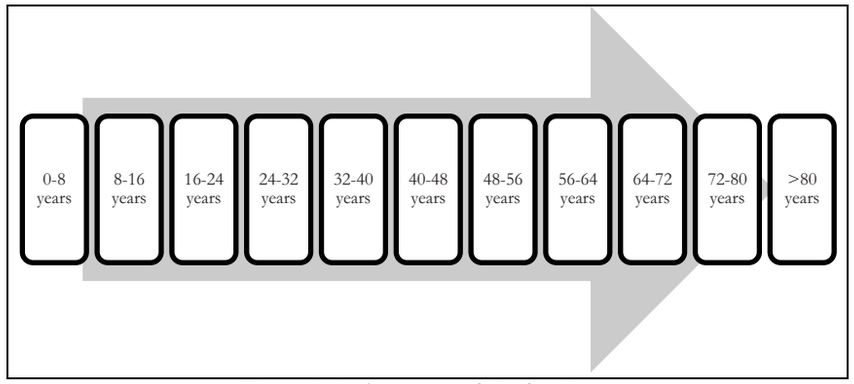


Figure 1.1. Age-sets of Gadaa System

The age-sets have different names across the Oromo country. However, the differences are namesake only or are mixed (or overlapped) with the name of the Gadaa-grades. Among every Oromo community, it is common that the names of the age-sets mix with the names of Gadaa-grades. There is a special case when the age-sets and Gadaa-grades overlap perfectly. It is therefore highly likely for the novice to make errors. The whole literature on Gadaa System is also littered with overlaps and corresponding errors.

The cause for this is the fact that the corresponding age-sets and Gadaa-grades of the two may refer to the same category of people. This happens if children were born to an Oromo father when he was at *Luba* grade when there is no staggered succession (see the principle of staggered succession in sections 1.3.6.1, 2.2.12, and 3.8.6.). If a son was born now to an Oromo father who has just become *Luba*, all the age-sets and the Gadaa-grades that the newborn would pass through would be aligned perfectly (except in staggered grades of *Raaba*, *Luba*, and *Yuba I,* where staggered succession is in practice) so much so that both refer to the same stage of his progression. It is highly likely that this was decidedly the case centuries ago for the firstborn sons. In

such an ideal case, making a distinction between age-sets and Gadaa-grades would appear to be unnecessary, and the Oromo would start to use the two interchangeably. It appears, the Oromo kept on using the two interchangeably not only when children were born during the first year after the transition rite to fatherhood but also during the whole eight-year window of begetting a child to the first Gadaa grade, which is known as *dhaloota* period. (*Dhaloota* period, which means 'period of begetting children,' is the eight-year window, when it is appropriate to beget sons according to Gadaa System.) Many scholars have also been using them interchangeably, with or without the cognizance of the difference; for example, whether a child was born immediately after fatherhood ceremony of the father, or after becoming *Luba* immediately or four years later (see the discussion of the distinction between the two in section 1.4.). Presently, more children are born outside of the *dhaloota* period, making the distinction necessary.

In this work, the writer shall try to clear the confusion, which appears to have been caused by "overlaps" of age-sets and Gadaa-grades, methodically, by separating the two by definition and by discussing them separately. The age-sets are, by definition, chronological age segments. Gadaa-grades are, by definition, progression grades. What the two have in common is that both are divided into eight-year periods and their respective transitions occur at the same point in time, except for the staggering Gadaa grades when parties hand over/take over the power to form Gadaa government for eight years. In separate explanations of the two, the age bracket, like (0-8), (8-16), (16-24), that every eleven age-sets represents in the former would be provided. In the latter, each of the eleven (formally ten, because grade *I* and *XI* always overlap) grade would be shown with Roman numerals, I–XI. Besides, the writer avoids overlap of names, which would help avoid the confusion.

Age-sets are politically relevant only from the time of the election of age-set leaders (*hayyuu Hiriyaa*) at the end of *Qeerroo* age-set (16-24 years) until one reaches *Gameessa* (middle age) age-set (40-48 years). Afterward, their relevance is more social, cultural, and ritual. The names of the age-sets, after *Gameessa* age-set, are politically less relevant. In general, age-sets are politically irrelevant before reaching maturity and after middle life.

Age-sets are developmentally relevant only until full maturity. In Oromo society, full maturity is reached at the age of forty. It is highly likely

that the Oromo have given the same name to the remained age-sets, except the last one.

The apparent lack of significant difference in their nomenclature from the corresponding Gadaa-grades after maturity may also have to do with a lack of significant difference between subsequent age-sets and Gadaa-grades. The Gadaa-grades between *Gadaa/Luba* and *Gadamoojjii* are referred to commonly as *Yuba*, *Luba,* and *Guula* in southern, central, and western Oromia respectively. Each of them has four eight-year grades. Distinctions are made between these grades using suffixes of Roman numerals. For example, as *Luba I, Luba II, Luba III, Luba IV,* and *Yuba I, Yuba II,* etc. In places, the name "*Gadaa*" itself is used with ordinal numbers as *Gadaa I*, *Gadaa II*, . . . to denote these Gadaa-grades. This last usage is also employed to denote five age-sets from (40–48) to (72–80) years, even though very rarely. The writer has adopted this usage but avoided overlap by substituting it with another common name for matured age-sets in the society (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1
Alternative and preferred names of the age-sets of Gadaa System

Age-sets	Alternate Names	Preferred Names
0–8	*Daa'ima/Ijoollee/Mucaa*	*Daa'ima*
8–16	*Ilma/Ijoollee*	*Ijoollee*
16–24	*Qeerroo/ Gurbaa*	*Qeerroo*
24–32	*Dardaroo/Dargaggoo*	*Dargaggoo*
32–40	*Gaheessa*	*Gaheessa*
40–48	*Gadaa I/Gameessa*	*Gameessa*
48–56	*Gadaa II/Maanguddoo*	*Maanguddoo I*
56–64	*Gadaa III/ Maanguddoo*	*Maanguddoo II*
64–72	*Gadaa IV/ Maanguddoo*	*Maanguddoo III*
72–80	*Gadaa V/ Maanguddoo*	*Maanguddoo IV*
above 80	*Jaarsa*	*Jaarsa*

These age-sets are socially and ritually relevant to the Oromo. They serve as a mechanism of determining precedence and seniority on social and ritual events, next to the Gadaa-grades.

It is necessary to emphasize one more time that age–sets and Gadaa-grades (also referred to as Gadaa-stages or Gadaa classes) are not necessarily the same nor do they always align. Age-set is an age-based institution: it is

universal. Gadaa-grade is a genealogical-generation based institution: it exclusively applies to members of the genealogical generations of the party (Gadaa party). An Oromo who belongs to one age-set may belong to a non-corresponding Gadaa-grade. No member of two parties could belong to the same Gadaa-grade at the same time, except the junior *Raaba* of succeeding party and the senior *Raaba* of the preceding party for four years during staggered succession to political power (see *Figure 1.6, Figure 3.7*). However, members of more than one party could belong to the same age-set. The age-sets and the Gadaa-grades are aligned perfectly only for children born at the ideal time. This ideal time is immediately after the fatherhood ceremony of their fathers.

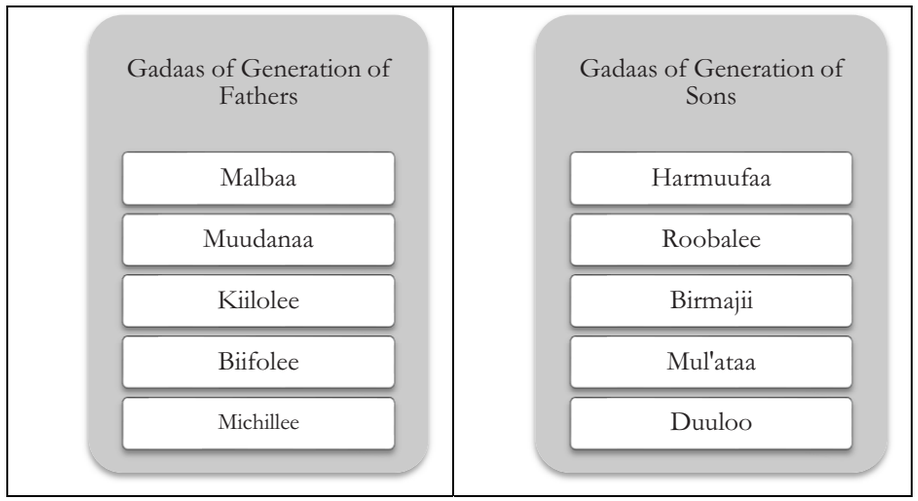


Figure 1.2. Historical Gadaas of the generation of fathers and sons

It is also necessary to emphasize the genealogical generations of the Gadaa System. In Gadaa System, fathers and sons belong to two separate genealogical generations of the same Gadaa (party/*gogeessa*). A father belongs to the party of the generation of the fathers of the Gadaa party. His son belongs to the party of the generation of the sons of the same Gadaa party. For example, if the father belongs to *Gadaa Malbaa*, the son will belong to *Gadaa Harmuufaa*. *Gadaa Harmuufaa* and *Gadaa Malbaa* (see *Figure 1.2*) are two genealogical generations of one Gadaa party (*gogeessa*). If the son could not catch up with the *Dabballee* grade of *Gadaa Harmuufaa* and would join the *Dabballee* grade of *Gadaa Malbaa*, he would become an add-on (*maxxaarrii*) in

Gadaa Malbaa and remains so for life. He could be *Luba* in *Gadaa Malbaa* but he could not be elected its *Abbaa Gadaa* because the *Abbaa Gadaa* could only be elected from the rightful generation, *Malbaa* (see the concept of add-ons, *itti makoo*, in sections 1.3.2.1. and 1.4.). So, to say, in every Gadaa cycle (cycle of the Gadaa grades), there is a parallel cycle at a time: one rightful generation and one add-on generation, the *maxxaarrii* generation (see section 1.3.2.1 and 1.4. for more on *maxxaarrii*). In both cycles, passage rite ceremonies are conducted but separately.

Also, it is important to note two issues, which might confuse, at least at this very beginning. First, there are slight variations on the number of age-sets among the Oromo. Some Oromo communities have adapted twelve age sets, where the last age-set is eighty-eight years and above. Formally, however, there are eleven age-sets in the Gadaa System. As mentioned above, the importance of the age-sets after the Gameessa (40-48 years) age-set is very insignificant. Second, a category of age-sets represents different Gadaa genealogical generations. Some writers have categorized the first five and the last seven of age-sets as the generation of children and the generation of adults, respectively (Hinnant 1977 cited in Jirata, 2013). Note that "the generation of children" and "the generation of adults" does not necessarily mean "the generation of the Gadaa of sons" and the "generation of the Gadaa of fathers" of the Gadaa System. The latter is a cycle of forty years that separates the Gadaa of a father and that of his son.

What is universal to both the age-set and Gadaa-grade is that both are divided into a period of eight years. The exceptions are, as mentioned above, the last age-set could be extended from 80 to 120 years of age and the extension of the *Raaba* grade for the staggered succession to power is compensated by the reduction of the Yuba I grade by the same number of years (see sections 1.3.6.1 and 3.8.6 and *Figure 1.6*). All transitions from one age-set and one Gadaa-grade to the next age-set or Gadaa-grade takes place at the same time and, ideally, on the same day except for the Gadaa grades affected by the staggered succession. Apart from the staggered Gadaa grades and the extended last age-set, every eight years the Oromo society moves from one age-set and one Gadaa grade to the next.

1.1.2. Gadaa-grades

Gadaa-grades are progressive membership stages through which members of a party must pass in the socio-political process of taking a leadership role; then, retiring from it gradually. This writer has adopted the name "Gadaa-grade" in this work. Writers have employed Gadaa class, Gadaa-stages, Gadaa cycle, and Gadaa steps interchangeably.

There are eleven Gadaa grades. The first five grades are progression grades; the last five are retirement grades; the one in the middle is where they take state power. As such, they may be likened with a flight of steps with five ascending steps on one side and five descending steps on the other side for the Gadaa (party) in power (see *Figure 1.3*). The *Luba* grade is the pinnacle of the steps.

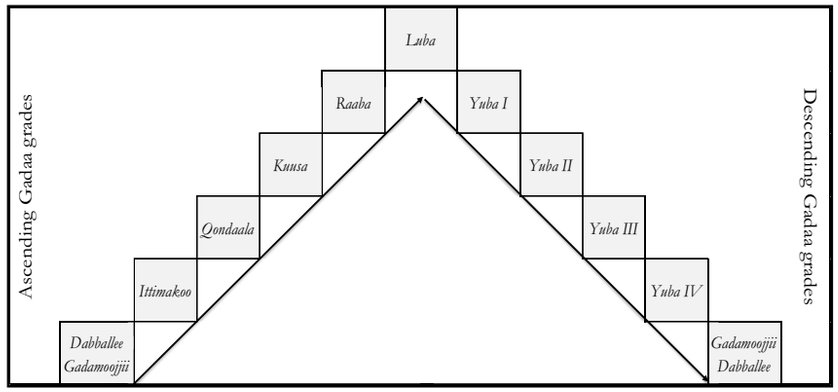


Figure 1.3. Illustration of ascents and descents of Gadaa-grades

The Gadaa grades are eight-year segments just like the age-sets. However, they are not based on age: they are independent of age. Gadaa grades have very little relation with the age-sets: they coincidentally correspond to the age-sets only when children are born immediately after the fatherhood ceremony of their fathers, i.e., during the first year of their fathers' *dhaloota* period.

This coincidental alignment may have encouraged a lesser number of Gadaa scholars to disregard the very common misalignments between the corresponding age-sets and the Gadaa-grades. They present the later as if they were dependent on ages, as the former does. Others present them as if

the age-sets were relevant and the same for both, focusing only on the ideal "right born" children.

However, not every child is born to an Oromo father while he is in the first year after he transitions to fatherhood. If an Oromo member of a party (*gogeessa*) fails to beget sons within the right period, which is *dhaloota* period, the age-sets and the Gadaa-grades of his children would never coincide. In general, his children would be born earlier or later. The age-sets of "early born" and "late born" children would then be advanced or delayed respectively compared to the corresponding age-sets of the "right born" children (see *Figure 1.7*). This requires the distinction between age-sets and Gadaa-grades and their respective names.

Table 1.2.
Age-sets and Gadaa-grades for ideal "right born" without staggered succession

Gadaa Age-set		Gadaa-grades	
Age-sets	Age-set Names	Gadaa-grades	Grade Names
0–8	*Daa'ima*	Grade I	*Dabballee*
8–16	*Ijoollee*	Grade II	*Ittimakoo*
16–24	*Qeerroo*	Grade III	*Qondaala*
24–32	*Dargaggoo*	Grade IV	*Kuusa*
32–40	*Gaheessa*	Grade V	*Raaba*
40–48	*Gameessa*	Grade VI	*Luba/Gadaa*
48–56	*Maanguddoo I*	Grade VII	*Yuba I*
56–64	*Maanguddoo II*	Grade VIII	*Yuba II*
64–72	*Maanguddoo III*	Grade IV	*Yuba III*
72–80	*Maanguddoo IV*	Grade X	*Yuba IV*
80–120	*Jaarsa*	Grade XI	*Gadamoojjii*

Note. In a four-year staggered succession, Grade V is extended by four years and Grade VII is shortened by the same four years.

The age-sets and Gadaa-grades fit perfectly only for ideal "right born" children (see Table 1.1) where there is no practice of staggered succession to power. By ideal "right born" this writer refers to those male children who are

born when their fathers have just turned *Luba*. These sons would be both *Dabballee* (Gadaa grade) and *Daa'ima* (age-set) for eight years. They would also become *Luba* at the age of forty. In other words, their Gadaa-grades and age-sets would be aligned perfectly throughout their life. All other children born to a *Luba* are "right born." The *Luba* grade is, therefore, an ideal period to beget children in Gadaa System where there is no staggered succession. However, state power transfer is in staggered succession among the Oromo polities. The number of standard years of staggered succession is four years, but some polities have made slight alterations. Staggered succession allows the *Raaba* grade to stay in the grade for four more years. The extra years would be compensated by their stay of four fewer years in the *Yuba I* grade (see discussion on staggered succession in sections 1.3.6.1., 2.2.12., and 3.8.6.) The effect is a shift of the *Luba* period by four years ahead. When a four-year staggered succession is in practice, the ideal period for giving birth is during the four years of extended *Raaba* grade (known as *Raaba Doorii* or *Doorii*) and the first half of *Luba* grade. All children who are born during this period are "right born." An ideal "right born" son is born at once after his father had become *Doorii*. In both cases, the ideal "right born" is born at once after the fatherhood ceremony. A father can have only one ideal "right born" son.

Regardless of whether there is a practice of staggered succession or not, all children who are born to an Oromo member of *gogeessa* (Gadaa party) in between his fatherhood ceremony (*Daamisa*) and his children's naming ceremony (*Maq-baasa*) are "right born" (see Table 1.4). Such fathers are known as *dhaloota*, those who are begetting children. It is an eight-year window to beget "right born" children. Children born before *Daamisa* and after *Maq-baasa* are known as "early born" and "late born" respectively. Section 1.4. discusses the concepts of "right born," "late-born," and "early born."

Presently, less and less Oromo are "right born." The number of "early born" Oromo seems to have increased tremendously over centuries. Most Oromo appear to start giving birth before they had performed fatherhood rites around the age of forty. As a result, the misalignment between age-sets and Gadaa-grades has been growing. So does the necessity to distinguish between the two and clear the resultant confusion. The two must have been aligned very closely in antiquity (and so were they in the 16th century), when the names of the two stood for the same object than today.

Table 1.3
Examples of alternate usage of names of Gadaa-grades

XI	X	IX	VIII	VII	VI	V	IV	III	II	I	Grade
Gadam oojjii	*Yuba IV*	*Yuba III*	*Yuba II*	*Yuba I*	*Luba*	*Raaba*	*Kuusa*	*Qondaala*	*Ittimakoo*	*Dabballee*	In this work
_	*Gadam oojjii*	*Yuba III*	*Yuba II*	*Yuba I*	*Luba/ Gadaa*	*Raaba /Doorii*	*Kuusa/ Raaba*	*Foollee*	*Dabballee*	*Ittimakoo*	(Hinew, 2012)
_	*Gadam oojjii*	*Hayyuu*	*Yuba II*	*Yuba*	*Luba*	*Raaba Doorii*	*Foollee*	*Dabballee*	*Ittimakoo*	*Gaammee*	(Mamo, 2017)
_	*Raaga*	*Gadamo ojjii*	_	_	*Luba*	*Qondaala*	*Foollee*	*Dabballee*	*Ittimakoo*	*Daa'imee*	(Birru, 2011)
_	_	_	_	_	*Guula*	*Raaba*	*Qondaala*	*Dabballee*	*Dabballee*	*Dabballee*	(Ceruli, 1922)
Jaarsa	*Gadam oojjii*	*Yuba II*	*Yuba II*	*Yuba I*	*Gadaa (Luba)*	*Raaba Doorii (Luba)*	*Kuusa*	*Qondaala*	*Foollee*	*Dabballee*	(Idossa, et al., 2007)
_	*Gadam oojjii*	*Yuba III*	*Yuba II*	*Yuba I*	*Gadaa*	*Raaba Doorii*	*Kuusa*	*Qondaala*	*Foollee*	*Dabballee*	(Geda, 2007)
Gadam oojjii	*Yuba IV*	*Yuba III*	*Yuba II*	*Yuba I*	*Gadaa*	*Raaba Doorii*	*Kuusa*	*Qondaala Gaammee Guruddaa*	*Foollee or Gammee Xixiqaqa*	*Dabbalee*	(Kelbessa, 2012)
Jaarsa	*Yuba Gadaa*	*Yuba*	*Baatuu*	*Gada*	*Doorii*	*Kuusa*	*Dhaajisa*	*Qarree*	*Dabballee*	*Suluda*	(Jirata, 2013)

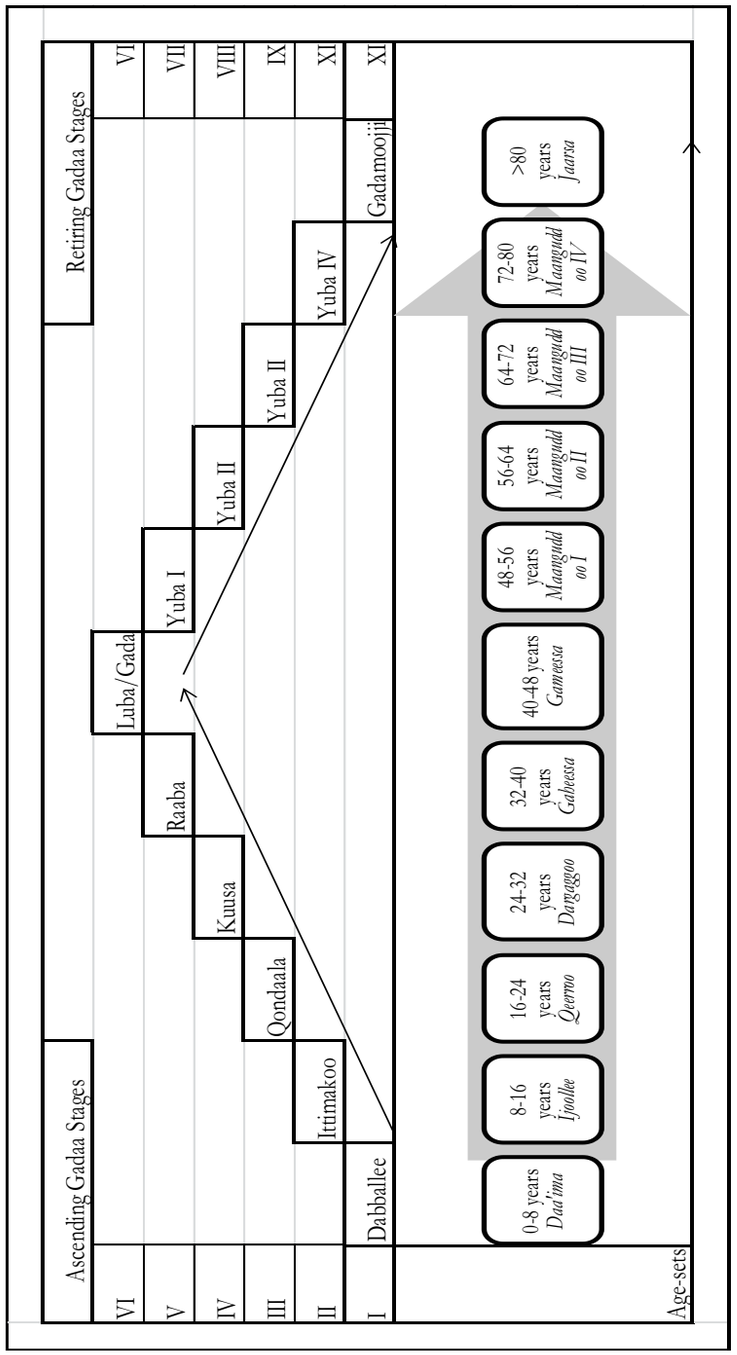


Figure 1.4. Gadaa-grades and age-sets

Historically, the Oromo cared very much to beget an ideal "right born" or, at least, a "right born" male children. In the 16th century, an Abyssinian monk recorded that they had a tradition of abandoning children who were not born at the right time. They probably planned so carefully to have children during their first half of the *dhaloota* period (*Raaba Doorii* in staggered succession and the first half of *Luba* in non-staggered succession). As a result, no significant difference between the name of age-sets and the Gadaa-grades could exist. Both meant the same at a point in time, particularly at the first stages of the creation of the Gadaa System. This may explain why the names of age-sets and their corresponding Gadaa-grades could have been used interchangeably. This is confusing today when the distinction has grown starker.

Since the 16th century, alternative names of these grades have appeared. The northern *Booranaa* (*Maccaa* and *Tuulamaa*), the *Baarentuu*, and the Southern *Booranaa* have slightly different names for the grades. *Ittimakoo, Dabballee, Foollee, Qondaala, Dooroma,* and *Luba* were the first six grades among the *Baarentuu* Oromo in the late 19th century, as recorded by Atsme Giorgis (Baissa, 2004). Among the *Maccaa* Oromo of West Shewa, *Dabballee, Ittimakoo, Foollee, Qondaala, Dhaloota,* and *Luba* appear to be current names of the first six Gadaa-grades. The difference from the *Baarentuu* names is on the first two and the fifth grades. The fifth grade seems a simple replacement of *Dooroma* with *Dhaloota.* The first two grades, however, are different in order only. Presently, the names of these Gadaa-grades (steps, stages, classes) vary from place to place, as do the names of age-sets. Some writers have used alternate names: others reshuffled some of the names or interchanged the names of age-sets with Gadaa grades mostly mistakenly (see Table 1.3). The Pan-Oromo Gadaa Council is expected to standardize the appellation of both the age-sets and Gadaa-grades and issue an official list to instill clarity of understanding and uniformity of meanings.

In the meantime, this writer suggests the obvious. Based on the most prevalent names of the Gadaa grades across the Oromo country, the following names, in ascending order, should serve as national standard: *Dabballee, Ittimakoo, Qondaala, Kuusa, Raaba, Luba, Yuba I, Yuba II, Yuba III, Yuba IV,* and *Gadamoojjii.* The writer has employed these appellations consistently in this work.

However, here too, the differences are namesake. In the 16th century, according to Bahrey's record, the names of the first three Gadaa-grades

among the Oromo were *Mucaa* (children), *Ilmaan* (boys), *Gurbaa* (teenagers/youth) (Baissa, 2004). These, however, are the names of age-sets: they refer exclusively to levels of biological development, which are still in use today. As mentioned above, the age-sets and the Gadaa-grades are independent. The former is based on biological age. The latter is based strictly on genealogical generation grades. Two Oromo persons who belong to the same age-set could belong to different Gadaa-grade, and vice versa.

It is clear that these variations of the appellation of the age-sets and the Gadaa-grades from place to place and from time to time, as are the names of the Gadaas (parties/*gogeessa*) themselves, are caused by the geographic expanse of the Oromo country and the main subdivision of the Oromo nation into major and junior moieties. These variations are not limited to the main sub-moieties. Among junior moieties, it is even more widespread.

Gadaa-grades are also known as Gadaa cycles. This is because the Gadaa-grades of each of the Gadaa parties repeat themselves after ten grades. When the most senior members of the party reach the eleventh (*Gadamoojjii*) stage, the junior members join the first stage; they become *Dabballee*. *Dabballee* and *Gadamoojjii* are overlapping grades (see *Figure 1.3 and Figure 1.6*). They make the Gadaa grade "cycle" connected.

In Gadaa System, age-sets are age-based mechanisms for effective management of physical and mental development of the Oromo until full maturity following the progression of biological age in life. The Oromo have designed an age-set system to care for their children properly. They use them as a guide to educate and train them and to share roles and responsibilities with them until they would become fully independent.

1.2. Age-set-based Care, Roles, and Responsibilities

Once they have become fully independent, the Oromo also depends on the age-set system to share socio-cultural roles and responsibilities until they retire fully from life. As introduced above, the age-sets are divided into eight-year chronological periods, except the last one that spans from 80 to 120 years. They are also further divided into three phases of five eight-years: developmental phase – age-sets (0–40 years); mature phase – age-sets (40-80 years); retirement phase – age-sets (80–120 years).

The interest here is on the first part of life, the first five age-sets. They are 0–8, 8–16, 16–24, 24–32, and 32–40 years. They form the first phase of life. Even though the Oromo believe in lifetime training and learning, the care, training, education, and share of roles and responsibilities in the household and a field are highly apparent during this first phase of life. The next five age-sets form the second phase of life. In this phase every Oromo is independent. They care for themselves, and discharge personal and public roles based on their responsibilities to their families, communities, and the Gadaa government. The last age-sets (above eighty years) form the last phase of life, old age. At this phase, seniors may need care from their younger family members and the community, but they have a key role of counseling, conflict resolution, and serving as judges and jurors as long as they are physically and mentally sound. Age-set based cares, roles, and responsibilities are prevalent in the first phase of life. In the other phases of life, no emphasis is placed on a specific age-set but the general category because the age-sets are not especially important. The discussion here is restrained to the first five age-sets, the first phase of life, accordingly.

1.2.1. 0 - 8 Years, *Daa'ima*

This first age-set is known as *Daa'ima, Mucaa, Ijoollee, or Dabballee*. Among the *Tuulamaa* Oromo, they are known as *Ittimakoo*. However, *Dabballee* and *Ittimakoo* are used as the appellation of the first age-set when people confuse the first age-set with the first Gadaa-grade, and when the names of the first and the second Gadaa-grade of the *Maccaa* and *Tuulamaa* Oromo are transposed. Nonetheless, all these appellations name the same age-set, 0–8 years of age. They, in principle, can be used interchangeably until the *Caffee* of the nation (pan-Oromo assembly of the multitude) or the National Council of *Abbaa Gadaa*s would reach some consensus on the appellations. To instill clarity to discussions and to curtail an already existing confusion this writer has adopted the name *Daa'ima*.

It is necessary to distinguish the first age-set and the first Gadaa-grade to introduce them distinctly and clearly. Even though *Daa'ima* is the most common name for the first age-set, it is often confused with the name *Dabballee*, the first grade of Gadaa-grades because all the "right born" *Dabballee* are born in this age-set. However, not everyone in the first Gadaa grade is in this age-set. "Early born" and very "late born" sons could already

be at an advanced age-set than *Daa'ima* by the time they would become nominal *Dabballee* (see the discussion under section 1.3.2.1.). The *Daa'ima* are children born to an Oromo at any reasonable age. The reasonable age to beget children is between marriage and retirement from *Luba* Grade. Marriage takes place at the beginning of *Raaba* Grade at about thirty-two years of age. The retirement age from *Luba* grade is at about forty-eight years. The reasonable age covers about sixteen years. However, children are usually born to an Oromo father after the fatherhood ceremony, which takes place around the age of forty. It takes place when one becomes *Raaba Doorii* (Senior *Raaba*) in staggered succession to power. From thence onwards, until one passes to the second half of *Luba* or *Yuba I* respectively is an ideal window of time for giving birth in the Oromo society. Children born during this period (known as *dhaloota* period) are born into the first Gadaa grade, *Dabballee*. They are "right born." Children born outside of this period could be "early born" or "late born" (see the discussion under section 1.4.). However, all children, regardless of when they were born without regard to the Gadaa-grade of their fathers, are born *Daa'ima*.

The *Daa'ima* enjoy the utmost love and care of their parents, the neighbors, and the community. Instinctive of maternity and social norms dictate that mothers must breastfeed them at least for one year. Throughout the rest of the eight years, they develop under the care of parents, neighbors, and society. Daily care for such young children is mostly a communal responsibility in the Oromo society. No one punishes or reproves the *Daa'ima*: everyone comforts and chaperons them. They are protected from any harm at any time and situation by Gadaa laws. Gadaa laws require that they must have a designated milk caw for sustained milk supply starting from six months.

The *Daa'ima* have no roles or responsibilities in the Gadaa System. They correspond with the Gadaa grade of *Dabballee*.

1.2.2. 8 – 16 Years, *Ijoollee*

Ijoollee is a critical age-set for education and training. Their education grows in complexity as they progress through the age-set. In the early grade, they are educated on basic mathematical operations orally and using nuggets of a traditional game known as *saddeeqa*. As they advance in an age in the age-set, education starts to become more complex. It takes a form of allegories,

proverbs, complex riddles, educational legends, poems, and history. The physical training focuses on traditional athletics and gymnastics. This includes horse riding, running, jumping, throwing, wrestling, swimming, climbing, stick fighting, and hunting. The skill training is sponsored by revenue from their parents. Besides, they learn basic skills of self-defense and social skills of dancing, singing, and peer relationship building.

This age-set is also critical in relationship building. When in this age-set, the boys explore their community and start to understand the geography beyond the horizons. They meet with their age mate (*gita*) and age-set mates (*hiriyaa*) regularly to play and to celebrate their favorite traditional holidays. One such holiday, proper to their age-set, is *Taboree* where boys sing and dance in groups after a bonfire. They visit each other in their respective homes and organize a get-together and festivities with the help of their parents. Such relationship-building and get-together would help them for Gadaa election campaigns and leadership contests at the latter stages of their life.

The *Ijoollee* is the age-set where members start to take minimal responsibilities. Traditionally, the *Ijoollee* of the pastoralist communities have the role of taking care of the calves of the cattle of their parents at around the dwelling. They also start helping their parents in garden works. In modern Oromo communities, they go to schools and complete primary and junior secondary education.

The age-set of *Ijoollee,* which generally corresponds with the *Ittimakoo* grade of Gadaa, culminates with traditional camp-out, known as *Ukee bahuu*. They camp-out in groups and engage in group contests, including traditional stick fighting. The events help them to identify the courageous and the strongest from among them for future leadership elections.

1.2.3. 16 – 24 Years, *Qeerroo*

Members of this age-set have a busy life. They correspond with members of the *Qondaala* grade of *Gadaa*. Traditionally, they learn cavalry and infantry warfare, explore their localities, form relationships with peer groups, build acceptance and good reputation in the community, and start to build good character and basic wisdom for future careers in the Gadaa government. At around the middle of the age-set, they begin consensual but osculating love relationships, known as *dhungoo*, with their girlfriends. They

also take partial responsibilities in supporting their families and themselves. They take the family cattle to distant places every other season for pasturing. They also start to make money or acquire more property for themselves. Their first property is usually the gift they receive from parents and relatives at the naming ceremony at the end of the *Dabballee* grade of the Gadaa if they were "right born."

The initiation to this age-set begins by the construction of temporary hut as a shelter at a place close to the neighborhood. It serves as the center of the peer group's camping. Over the years, they build the hut in collaboration with other members of the age-set from the neighborhood communities. This may take a couple of years.

In the meantime, their education and training would continue. Both would only become intensified. They are further educated on social and cultural norms, community rules, kin structures and social relationships, religious values and ceremonies, their own physiological and anatomical developments, reproductive health, social taboos, public shames, resources economics, and, in the end, they may be introduced to Oromo philosophy depending on their inclinations. They are trained further on agriculture and animal husbandry, hunting, and traditional athletics and gymnastics. They also begin warfare training, including by staging a mock war.

During the first half of the age-set, they occasionally move as a group to the shade that they had built. They do so after their parents and the community blessed them and the shelter. They spend valuable time in the shade socializing and building strong goodwill relationships.

Among pastoralist communities, *darabaa* is an alternative to the occasional camping out. It is a grazing camp where the village boys between the age of 16 and 24 (*Qeerroo*) take the family herd, usually cattle, independently to a faraway place for seasonal grazing. They do so in groups: they may do so eight times while in this age-set. It is a challenging and demanding undertaking that usually lasts three rainy months. During these months, the boys are free but responsible for self-defense. They must defend themselves and their cattle from both wild animals and cattle robbers. They also dwell in makeshift camps that they dismantle and move occasionally, as they move along with the cattle following the waning of the pasture.

They, however, could find time to bond and build an extraordinarily strong social relationship. Out of such a relationship, they form their age-set association, *Hiriyaa,* towards the middle of the age-set. The number of age-

set associations that are proportionate to the number of the lowest structure of the polity (usually a village) could be formed. They institutionalize the *Hiriyaa* by electing its leaders, *hayyuu Hiriyaa* (peer group leaders of the age-set). They usually choose six of them. The *hayyuu Hiriyaa* are social and cultural leaders of the *Hiriyaa.*

Hiriyaa is the foundation for the formation of *Cibraa*, an age-based regiment in the Oromo traditional military. *Hiriyaas* of a cluster of villages forms a *Cibra.* They also elect their leaders. The elected *hayyuu Hiriyaa* compete in the election. Only those who have proved bravery and heroism and good leadership may be elected. The elected leader of the *Cibra* is known as *Abbaa Cibra.* He would work with *Abbaa Duulaa* of the governing Gadaa during the time of war.

During their stay in the shade, the *hiriyaa* obtain food by hunting whenever that could be sustainable; or their parents and the community supply them. Oromo communities often offer them goats. They often consume the meat of goats as the staple food of the camp. In the end, they break out of the ceremonial hut, symbolically. The symbolism is related to the declaration of their adulthood. It also signifies their return to the community as adults.

After breaking out from the shelter around the middle of the age-set, the members keep their relationship. They form a traditional song and dance group. They sing and dance at holidays and joyful events throughout the eight years and receive gifts, usually, animals for meat. They consume them and continue building their bodies. Members who are not in the *Qondaala* grade of the Gadaa may continue to dance *foollee* together with the *Qondaala* as adjuvant members of the *foollee* group during the last years of the age-set (see the discussion under section 1.3.3.1.) or form their junior group called "*Dabballee*" among the *Tuulamaa* and some adjoining *Maccaa* Oromo communities. This is despite members belonging mostly to the corresponding *Ittimakoo* grade of Gadaa.

At present, the primary role and responsibility of the *Qeerroo* are to attend higher education. Among most of the Oromo communities, the *Qeerroo* attend their upper secondary and college education. There are Oromo communities that have kept the traditional education and training system as an alternative or complementary to modern upper secondary and higher education. This is particularly true among remote pastoralist communities.

1.2.4. 24 – 32 Years, *Dargaggoo*

The *Dargaggoo* are the unmarried adult. There are also writers and commentators who refer to them as senior *Qeerroo*. They are at the prime time of their youth. They, in general, correspond with the *Kuusa* grade of Gadaa: most of the *Dargaggoo* could be in *Kuusa* grade.

The *Dargaggoo* seek actively to acquire private property. Even though they might still share the same home with their parents, they work hard to earn an independent life. They begin to apportion their share from their labor contribution to the family business or livelihood. With such apportioned property and support from their parents, they build themselves a home in preparation for marriage. They may also formalize their love relationship of the *dhungoo* from the previous age-set if the relationship is expected to conclude with marriage. The *Dargaggoo* must work even harder as they would need economic means, which would be necessary to set up a family. In most cases, they marry at the end of the age-set.

At this age-set, the elected *hayyuu Hiriyaa* (age-set leaders) also practice social and political leadership within the age-set. They organize the members for social and economic activities and events. They usually execute public works of the community and assist in organizing and facilitating some activities of the Gadaa government.

Besides, traditionally, the *Dargaggoo* are also engaged in intensive warfare training. *Dargaggoo* is an age-set particularly for intensive self-defense and paramilitary training. Depending on whether there is an active war or self-defense, or expectation of either of it, the *Abbaa Cibraa* may organize formal military training in coordination with the corresponding *Luba* leaders (*hayyuu Kuusaa*) and the *Abbaa Duulaas*.

1.2.5. 32 – 40 Years, *Gaheessa*

The name of the age-set signifies full potential. Members are at their prime physical strength and military readiness. In general, they correspond with members of the *Raaba* grade of *Gadaa*. Military readiness, marriage, demanding work, advanced education and training, and community services are the main activities at this age-set. Members continue to sharpen their military competences. They become tiptop warriors. They start a family: they marry according to the Gadaa family law. Members could also pursue

advanced education. In that case, they must form an association with the Oromo experts of law, philosophy, an astronomical calendar, divination, traditional medicine, etc. Most importantly, the members supply voluntary community services in the areas of crime prevention and law enforcement. While on such duty, traditionally, they wear a white band of fabric bordering under their hair in contrast to the red such band of the fabric of the *Raaba* grade.

1.2.6. 40 – 48 Years, *Gameessa* – above 80 Years, *Jaarsa*

After reaching the age of forty, the role of age-sets diminishes. Its use becomes nominal, but it would remain an important sociological ranking and measure of progression in biological seniority and maturity.

The age-set after forty years and their corresponding names, as they are commonly known among some Oromo are 40–48 years (Gadaa *I*), 48–56 years (Gadaa *II*), 56–64 years (Gadaa *III*), 64–72 years (Gadaa *IV*), 72–80 years (Gadaa *V*), and 80 years and above (*Jaarsa*). The names are the count of how many Gadaa celebrations (*Jaarraa*) the members of the age-set have witnessed since reaching the nominal age-set of Gadaa (40–48), if not "right born" (see the discussion under section 1.4.). If one is in *Gadaa III*, for example, it means that the person has witnessed three *Jaarraa*s to date, including his own *Jaarraa* if "right born." The *Boorana* sometimes refer to senior *Jaarsa*, above the age of 88, as *Torbicha*. It signifies that the *Jaarsa* has been through seven Gadaa periods, *jaarraas*. The *Gujii* Oromo have four levels of *Jaarsaa* known as *Jaarsa Guduruu*, *Jaarsa Qululluu*, *Jaarsa Raqiyaa*, and *Jaarsa Ginnyaa* corresponding to the age-sets of 72–80, 80–88, 88–96, and above 96 years respectively.

It is important to explain the probable causes of confusion that could arise from the use of 'Gadaa' as age-sets. One might wonder why the *Jaarraas* that an Oromo person witnesses before reaching the age-set of 40–48 do not count as age-set, for example, *Gadaa I* being 0–8 years of age. This is because 'Gadaa' as age-set is used only for matured ages, and there are already established and well-known names of the age-sets before maturity. Ages below and above forty are ages of development and ages of maturity, respectively. The number of age-sets of Gadaa (*Jaarraa*), i.e., *Gadaa I* to *Gadaa*

V, which an Oromo has lived, pertains only to his life after attaining the age of forty. When an elderly Oromo says, 'I have lived four *Gadaa*s.' he means four *Jaarraa*s have come and gone since he had become a middle-aged man. In other words, he has witnessed a change in the Gadaa government four times. Yet, there are some Oromo communities, the *Booranaa* Oromo of south Ethiopia and north Kenya for example, who employ the term '*Gadaa*'/'*Jaarraa*' as a measure of biological age. In such cases, it is not an age-set. It is the count of the number of Gadaa power transition ceremonies that had taken place since one was born as an approximate measure of age. Such multiple usages of 'Gadaa' as a measure of age could easily lead to confusion.

This writer would like to note that, despite the existence of clear distinctions between age-sets and Gadaa-grades, it is a very common observation that the names of the Gadaa-grades after *Gadaa* (the sixth grade) are used habitually as an appellation of the names of the age-sets after age-set 40–48. Thus, *Luba*, *Yuba I, Yuba II*, etc. (among the southern *Booranaa*) and *Gadaa, Guula I, Guula II*, etc. (among the *Maccaa*) are used instead of *Gadaa I*, *Gadaa II*, etc. Such mixed-use adds only more confusion. Standardizing the usage is long overdue.

In this work, the writer has made a conscious choice to minimize or avoid confusion. Accordingly, the name 'Gadaa' would not be used in this work as a measure of age or as part of the names of an age-set. Instead, generic but approximate names for the senior age-sets are employed. Hence, *Gameessa* instead of *Gadaa I*, *Maanguddoo I – Maanguddoo IV* instead of *Gadaa II – Gadaa V* are used (see Table 1.1); whereas the name *Jaarsa* is maintained for most senior age-set.

Gameessa, as the name suggests, is someone at the peak of his mental and physical potentials. At this age-set, members are in a highly active political, social, military, and economic engagement. They play a key role in the affairs of the polity. Similarly, they take the utmost responsibilities in defending the polity, promoting Gadaa values, educating and training the younger generation, and conducting communal economic, environmental, and ritual activities. In general, it is the age-set that defines the Oromo polity.

Maanguddoo refers to groups of senior age-sets. These age-sets are 48 – 56, 56 – 64, 64 – 72, and 72 – 80 years, from *Maanguddoo I* to *Maanguddoo IV*, respectively. *Maanguddoo* simply means mature citizens. They are senior citizens who are still active in the social, political, economic, cultural, and ritual spheres of the Oromo community. Their activeness, however,

continues to decline as they progress from one age-set to the next. Their main roles along that decline are serving the nation as a repository of the wisdom and the knowledge of Oromo and passing them to the younger generation. They also play a key role in law-making and administration of justice. They play a crucial role in formulating legal propositions and auditing the laws. They serve as council members, *hayyuu*, and judges. They are responsible for oversight of the Gadaa government, education and training of the youth, and preservation of the culture *(aadaa*) and the Gadaa System.

The last age-set, *Jaarsa*, has a special place in the Oromo society. The Oromo revere every member of this age-set. Every member of the Oromo society supplies them with due care and support. It is, however, important to make a distinction between '*Jaarsa'* as an age set of above 80 years and '*Jaarsa*' (male) and *'Jaartii'* (female) as elderly councilors and as judges. In this latter appellation, '*Jaarsa*'/ '*Jaartii*' mean citizens who could be in any of the *Maanguddoo I – Maanguddoo IV* or *Jaarsa* age-set. When one or more of these senior citizens serve as adjudicators in the Oromo traditional Courts, *Jaarsummaa*, they are referred to also as '*Jaarsa*,' meaning jurist. Elected members of these senior citizens who serve as justices are known as *Jaarsa biyyaa*, meaning 'judges and reconcilers of the country.' The presence of anyone in the age-set of *Jaarsa* would only increase the profile of the '*Jaarsa biyyaa*' or '*Jaarsa*.'

1.3. Gadaa-grade-based Rites, Roles, Responsibilities

1.3.1. Grade I: *Dabballee*

Members of Gadaa Grade I are known as *Dabballee*. In principle, *Dabballee* are children under the age of eight years. However, they are no ordinary children. They are children born to an Oromo father at the right time as per the laws of the Gadaa System. In other words, they are children born to an Oromo father when he is in the *dhaloota* period, between fatherhood (*Daannisa*) and naming (*Maq-baasa*) ceremonies (see the discussion under section 1.4, *Figure 1.7,* and *Figure 1.8*.). They belong to the

Daa'ima age-set. The *Daa'ima* are not necessarily *Dabballee*, but children who are born *Dabballee* are necessarily *Daa'ima*.

Children born to an Oromo father who is not within the *dhaloota* period are not *Dabballee*. At birth, they do not belong to the *Dabballee* grade of Gadaa but to the *Daa'ima* age-set. If a child were born to an Oromo father at the end of *Qondaala* grade, at 24 years old, for example, he would become nominal *Dabballee* at a very late age, at 17 years of age. Similarly, if he was born when his father was at the beginning of *Yuba* II grade, at the age of 57, he would "skip" the first two Gadaa-grades (*Dabballee* and *Ittimakoo*), at the expense of not having the opportunity to be elected *Abbaa Gadaa,* and joins at the third grade, *Qondaala* (see the discussion under section 1.3.2.1). Otherwise, he would have to wait for the initiation of the Gadaa of the generation of fathers for more than 16 years or the Gadaa of the generation of sons for more than 56 years (see *Figure 1.7*). Yet, he would join the age-sets at *Daa'ima* (0–8 years of age), in both cases, because the age-sets are independent of the Gadaa-grades. The child would have no possibility to be elected *Abbaa Gadaa* because he would be born out of the harmony of age-set and Gadaa-grade. Very providentially, such cases are almost non-existent.

As a rule, Oromo fathers produce offspring only after they had performed the fatherhood rite (*Daannisa*). If the child were born at an early stage, he would have to wait for more than forty years to enter the *Luba* grade, as he could only become *Luba* forty years after his father. Similarly, if a child were born to a father who had passed the *Luba* grade, he would have to enter the *Luba* grade before the age of forty. These offset the synchronized relationship between the age-sets and Gadaa-grades and the genealogical generation gap. Gadaa culture abhors having a misaligned and discordant child, particularly a male child. In the distant past, children born to an Oromo man before he had attained the *dhaloota* period were either abandoned or given to non-Oromo for adoption. This is the reason, even though they could marry and beget children while they were in the regular *Raaba g*rade, the Oromo wait until *Daannisa* that transition them from regular *Raaba* to *Raaba Doorii* (*Luba* in waiting) and reached *dhaloota* period to have "right born" children.

This strict rule appears to have been relaxed since the last century. Through time, the Oromo have adapted a lazes-fare approach to the actual age at which a child might be born to an Oromo. The strict rule was repealed in *Boorana* during the Gadaa of *Gobbaa Bulee* (1968–1976) (Bassi and Tache,

2005, *Note* 13). Even though it is highly recommended to have children at the right time, now the Oromo can have children at the time of their choice. Presently, the most important rule to have children among the Oromo is not the age of the father but the means at his disposal to raise them. Typically, they start to beget children in their thirties. As a result, there are more *Daa'ima* in society who are not *Dabballee*.

Unique features typify the *Dabballee* grade. First, they have no formal name, but affectionate nicknames given to them by their parents or grandparents. Among some Oromo communities, their parents not only referred to them as girls but also dress them like one. Second, they wear a hairstyle known as *Gudurui*. It is grown inborn hair for the "right born." It is left to grow, usually in dreadlocks. The dreadlocked hair (*Gudurui*) is decorated with cowry shells or worked ambers or other prized stones. The decoration is one of the features that set them apart from the ordinary children of *Daa'ima* age-set, who are not *Dabballee*. Older children ("early born") who become nominal *Dabballee* may also grow their hair in dreadlocks and decorate it as the "right born" *Dabballee*. It is never shaved so long as one is in the *Dabballee* grade. It is shaved only when they pass to the next Gadaa grade at their induction to the party of their father as *Ittimakoo*. Third, they enjoy full care and protection of their parents, relative, and neighbors due to their liminal and ritual status particularly if they were "right born" *Dabballee*. No one punishes or disappoints them wittingly under any circumstance. Doing so is considered an offense against *Waaqa* (one universal God of humanity). For the sustained supply of milk, each of them must have a designated milk cow. If the parents do not have milk cows, and could not afford for one, the relatives of their parents, the neighbors, a member of the clan of their parents, or the lineage assembly would provide them one free because of moral obligations. It is culturally and morally unacceptable among the Oromo communities that a *Dabballee* or any child does not have a sustained supply of milk at home.

The appreciation and care of the public to the "right born" *Dabballee* extends to his parents. His mother, for example, has priority at communal social, economic, and cultural services and public occasions in society. The public distinguishes her with her *gulmaa*, decorative ornament that she wears on her hair to signify that she is a mother of a *Dabballee*. Attending to a mother of *Dabballee* is also seen as a privilege in Oromo society. Both young and old women tend to her to receive her blessings. She is considered a

blessed person with whom the grace of *Waaqa* abides. Particularly those women who wish to have a baby seek her blessings. It is believed that if she blesses them wholeheartedly, they will have a baby. The *Dabballee* also do the blessing under the guidance of elders and their parents. The Oromo people believe that the language (expressions) of the *Dabballee* is the sanctified language of *Waaqa*. They also believe that *Waaqa* sometimes speaks through the pure heart and mind of the *Dabballee*. Every member of the society would want to be liked by the *Dabballee* and disregard highly disappointing them.

Table 1.4
Passage rites in staggered succession

From		Passage rite	To
Dabballee		*Maq-baasa* (Naming/induction ceremony)	*Ittimakoo*
Ittimakoo		*Foollee*, ritual singing and dancing	*Qondaala*
Qondaala		*Foollee,* ritual singing and dancing Election of *hayyuu Aduulaa*	*Kuusa*
Kuusa		*Rakoo* (Marriage ceremony)	*Raaba*
Raaba	*Regular Raaba*	*Daannisa* (Fatherhood ceremony) Election of First *Abbaa Gadaa*	*Raaba Doorii*
	Raaba Doorii	*Buttaa* (ritual feast /*nyaachisa*) *Baallii* (Power take over)	*Luba*
Luba		*Baallii* (Power hand over)	*Yuba I*
Yuba I		-	*Yuba II*
Yuba II		-	*Yuba III*
Yuba III		-	*Yuba IV*
Yuba IV		-	*Gadamoojjii*
Gadamoojjii		*Qumbii* (Retirement ceremony)	Full retirement

To advance to the next Gadaa-grade, a passage ritual, a transition rite, must be performed for the *Dabballee*. Transition rite from *Dabballee* to *Ittimakoo* is one of the sacred rites. It begins with ritual shaving of the deadlocked hair of the *Dabballee* and the formal naming ceremony. Before the shaving, however, the hair is drenched with a mix of milk and water. Milk symbolizes calmness, satisfaction, and wealth; water symbolizes origin, sustenance of life, and purification. The family, relatives, friends, and members of the neighborhood perform rituals according to the customs and

traditions for the passage rite. The passage rite could be performed in-group or individually, at home, or in public.

The ritual transition from *Dabballee* to *Ittimakoo* is concluded by *maq-baasa/ammachiisa/gubbisa* ceremony, a naming ceremony. It is a traditional and religious ceremony, but it coincides with the *Caffee* assembly, a socio-political assembly when a four-year staggered succession is being practiced. The *Qaalluu* conducts the naming usually privately for those who become *Ittimakoo* outside of the Gadaa of their generation. This is more so for *ilmaan Jaarsaa* who are named at home (see *Note* to *Figure 1.6*). The *ayyaantuu/Qaalluu* usually gives the names of male ancestors to the boys. The choice of the name could also be made by the parents depending on the circumstance in their life around the birth of the child or their wishes for him. Most parents name their children themselves in private or in public ceremonies. After *Maq-baasa*, the *Dabballee* would be known by his given name at home, the nicknames are abandoned.

The *Dabballee* may also be given a group name. The *Caffee* assembly that oversees their official induction to their party gives them the group name. The group names, in general, are broad in their meaning and scope as any other Oromo names. They are associated mostly with nature, events in nature, and hopes and aspirations. They are reflections of strong divine actions, meanings, and messages. The group would be known with this name henceforth.

The group name could also be the name of the government that they would institute when they would become *Luba*. Gadaas can have multiple names of their Gadaa government. However, Gadaa government names are repetitive. A Gadaa government could also be named after the name of the First *Abbaa Gadaa*.

1.3.2. Grade II: *Ittimakoo*

The naming ceremony marks the formal initiation/induction of the young right born boys (sons of *dhaloota*) to the Oromo polity. At the naming ceremony, the former *Dabballee* are given a group name of initiation. Traditionally, if their fathers' Gadaa generation (*luba*) was *Muudanaa*, for example, their Gadaa generation (*luba*) would be *Roobalee*. Oromo communities have kept such old names since the 16th century. However, such names are not permanent. New names could be given to the newly

forming *luba* at the initiation and the new *luba* may make it the name of the genealogical generation. After the initiation, the boys become *itti makoo,* which means 'those who have been inducted or initiated'; hence, the name of the Gadaa grade, *Ittimakoo*. The *Ittimakoo* are new initiates to the Gadaa System. They generally correspond with *Ijoollee* age-set, 8–16 years of age.

Among some Oromo polities, both the name and the hairstyle of the *Ittimakoo* may vary. Among the *Boorana,* the right born *Ittimakoo* are known after their hairstyle as *Gaammee Xixiqqaa.* The *Ituu* and the *Gujii* Oromo call them *Maxxaarii* and *Suluda* respectively. Both signify formal integration into the polity. After the initiation, they would no more be considered sacred and religiously positioned between *Waaqa* and human, but human. The *Ittimakoo* wear a *gaammee*. *Gaammee* is a hairstyle where part of the hair is shaved from the center of the head like a halo, leaving the hair at all edges. The *Qondaala* (also known as *Gaammee Gurguddaa* among the *Boorana*) also wear the same hairstyle but the shaven circular part would be smaller.

The conclusion of the passage rite from *Dabballee* to *Ittimakoo* also marks the beginning of entitlement to the property. At the naming ceremony, all members of the kin in pastoralist communities contribute cattle, sheep, or goat, one each at least, as a gift for the child. They may send their pledges through a representative or do so by availing themselves in person. Customs require close relatives to be present at the ceremony. The gifts, usually cattle, would become the child's private property, the first riches for his future livelihood. Such first entitlement to a property is known as *dhoqqee dhaabbachuu* (it means 'installing dung,' dung being a figure of speech for private property). Its sequel, known as *dhoqqee buusuu* (accounting for the property by collecting and piling cow dung from within his ranch), would take place after forty years during the *Buttaa* ceremony, the welcoming festive ceremony of power takeover. Cattle have been the measure of wealth and property among the Oromo.

The *Ittimakoo* are students with no formal roles and responsibilities or formal leadership. They begin learning some basics about the Oromo social organization and the institutions of the Gadaa System and the Gadaa government. As they progress in age and maturity, their fathers, now in the second half of *Luba* and *Yuba I*, have the responsibility to teach them about the Gadaa System. They teach them about the history, institutions, and functions of the System. They do so over an extended period so that the *Ittimakoo* would have the time to internalize the oral education and practice

part of it, which is proper at their grade and age. The *Ittimakoo* are also trained by senior grades on stylized ritual singing and dancing known as *Foollee.* The *Ittimakoo* take part in *Foollee* as novice (see section 1.3.3.1.). They also learn how to sing and dance on other Gadaa and cultural ceremonies. The *Ittimakoo* have neither political role nor have formal peer leadership. This is true regardless of whether they are initiated early or late, are rightful or nominal.

1.3.2.1. Some Explanations on *Ittimakoo*

At this junction, it is exceedingly important to note that there are two general types of *itti makoo.* One is the *Ittimakoo* as discussed above in section 1.3.2 as Gadaa Grade II. They are the first initiates to the party of their father and the Gadaa of the generation of sons, not to the Gadaa of the generation of their father. The other is *maxxaarrii,* the name this writer uses to distinguish sons who are not in the Gadaa grades of their generation (Gadaa of the generation of the sons) but become add-ons in Gadaa of the generation of the father. The *maxxaarrii* are also *itti makoo*, initiate, but they are initiated not in their genealogical generation (*luba*) but as an add-on to another (*luba*). Readers should bear in mind that there are two genealogical generations in every party, that of the fathers and the sons.

1.3.2.1.1. Three Types of *Ittimakoo*

Itti makoo (initiates) are of three types: the regular *itti makoo*, the late *itti makoo*, and the early *itti makoo* (see *Figure 1.7*). The first are sons of *dhaloota* ("right born") who become first initiates within the prescribed age-range. They are the *Ittimakoo* discussed above. The second are sons who become initiates at an advanced age because of early birth to fathers who were in *Kuusa* or regular *Raaba* grades. Historically, such sons could not be initiated to Gadaa. Among the Oromo polities where they are tolerated or laws for their inclusions have been promulgated, they too are initiated together with the regular *itti makoo*. The third are sons who are born or adopted after the naming ceremony of their peers.

1.3.2.1.2. Two Classes of Late Born *Ittimakoo*

The last types of *itti makoo* are classified into two: those who were born between the naming ceremony and the election of their *hayyuu Aduulaa* (end

of *Qondaala* grade) (early *itti makoo*) and those who were born or adopted after the end of *Qondaala* Grade, after the leadership formation (*maxxaarrii*) in their Gadaa genealogical generation. The first class, particularly those who were born when their peers were in the *Ittimakoo* grade, may join the grade directly without initiation. This is not a practice among the mainstream Oromo polities though. The latter class cannot catch up with their peers. They wait and join the Gadaa grade system either at the next initiation (*Ittimakoo*) grade of the Gadaa of the generation of fathers or wait for more than one Gadaa genealogical generation and join the *Ittimakoo* grade of the Gadaa of the generation of sons at a very advanced age.

This writer refers to those who join the *Ittimakoo* grade of the Gadaa of the generation of fathers as add-ons (inclusion, annex, attachment) as late *itti makoo,* as *maxxaarrii*. *Maxxaarrii,* in this case, does not refer to Gadaa grade or initiation/induction to Gadaa party nor does it stand as a separate Gadaa grade. It refers to an add-on, a nominal membership, to a Gadaa generation that is disharmonious with its own Gadaa generation in the Gadaa genealogical generation-set. In this respect, *maxxaarrii* refers to children who are attached to the genealogical generation of fathers because of very late birth or very late adoption. As *maxxaarrii* to the Gadaa of the generation to which they do not normally belong, they lose the privileges of being rightful *Dabballee,* and they would not have the right to be elected *Abbaa Gadaa*. However, they would become an auxiliary *Luba* passing through all the other Gadaa stages of the generation in which they are add-ons.

1.3.2.1.3. Erroneous Use of *Ittimakoo*

It is also particularly important to address a mistaken usage of *Ittimakoo* that appears in Gadaa literature and other formal and informal discussions. Rushing scholars have presented *Ittimakoo* as the first grade of Gadaa, followed by *Dabballee*. This has been the case when discussing the practice of the Gadaa System among the *Tuulamaa* Oromo of central Ethiopia in particular. In principle, no Gadaa grade precedes *Dabballee*. The usage of *Ittimakoo* as the first Gadaa grade originates from a mistaken designation of very early and very late-born children, who both are waiting to be formally initiated/inducted to the *Ittimakoo* grade of the Gadaa of their own generation and the Gadaa of the generation of fathers as late *itti makoo* and as *maxxaarrii* (add-ons) respectively as discussed shortly. Late *itti makoo* (late initiates) do not constitute a separate Gadaa grade that precedes *Dabballee*, the first Gadaa

grade. They are only waiting. The usage of *Ittimakoo* as a Gadaa grade that stands for this waiting group and as a Gadaa grade that precedes *Dabballee* to accommodate them has been mistaken. See examples in *Notes* to *Figure 1.8.* (*Key to Illustration births*, No. 10) and *Figure 1.7*.

1.3.3. Grade III: *Qondaala*

Members of the third Gadaa grade are known as *Qondaalaa.* The *Qondaalaa* are distinguished varyingly in public among the Oromo polities. Members of the grade wear the same hairstyle as the regular *Ittimakoo* among the *Boorana,* where they are also known as senior Gamme *(Gaammee gurguddaa)*. The difference is usually the size of the shaved circle at the center of the head. In the case of *Qondaala*, the circular shave is smaller. Among the *Maccaa* and *Tuulamaa* Oromo, they usually grow their hair in full to make *afroo*.

The distinct types of *Itttimakoo* converge to *Qondaala.* The late and the early initiates (late *Ittimakoo* and early *Ittimakoo*) are older and younger, respectively. The add-ons (*maxxaarrii*) to Gadaa of the generation of fathers are always older except when they are born nominal *Dabballee* forty years late. All types of initiates (*Ittimakoo*) progress as a single unit starting from *Qondaala* grade. The irregular initiates cannot be so many. The early initiates (early *Ittimakoo*) are very exceptional. The discussion here, thus, focuses on the regular initiate *Qondaala.* They are the "right born" *Qondaala.*

Qondaala grade is one of the especially important grades in the Gadaa System. They train and learn harder than the *Ittimakoo.* The *Yuba* grades train and educate the *Qondaala* grade on warfare, group formation, leadership and relationship building, management of election campaign, history, culture, and social structure of the Oromo. They also educate and train them on the Gadaa System and its principles (Constitution) and laws. The *hayyuu* (Oromo traditional scholars) may also introduce them to the Oromo worldview and philosophical thoughts. At this grade, members also prove their adulthood by taking part in manly events. They also take part in *Buttaa* ceremonies forming senior ritual songs and dance band (*foollee)* and actively critic *Abbaa Gadaa* and the Gadaa government. Finally, they form their leadership structure and begin formal political activities.

Two key events take place at the *Qondaalaa* grade that needs attention. They are *Foollee* and the election of peer leaders. The first is ritual the second is political. It is necessary to elaborate on both here because of the confusion

in connection to the usage of the name *Foollee* in the former and because of the importance of election in the Gadaa System for the latter.

1.3.3.1. *Foollee*

The use of the name *Foollee* as a name of a Gadaa grade is mistaken. It is often used inaptly as the name of the Gadaa-grade of *Qondaala* itself (see Hinew, 2012), as the 16–24 years age-set (see Geda, 2007; Idossa, Awlachew, Namara, Babel, and Gupta, 2007), or even as alternative for *Kuusa* grade (see Mamo, 2017; Birru, 2011). Among the *Maccaa* and *Tuulamaa* Oromo, *Foollee* appears to have replaced *Qondaala* in public conversations. However, it is important to note *Foollee* is not a Gadaa grade nor is it limited to specific Gadaa grade. It is the name of the institution of the ritual song and dance performed by members of the juniors Gadaa grades of the party during *Buttaa* ceremonies. As such, it refers to a group of people (a song and dance band/troupe) that takes part in *Foollee*. These groups of people could be composed of either the *Qondaalaa* or the *Ittimakoo* Gadaa grades. Each of them could form a separate *Foollee* band/troupe, also known as *foollee* among *Maccaa* and *Tuulamaa* and *Mukkee* among Boorana.

Gadaa System requires the *Qondaalaa* and the *Ittimakoo* (also known transposed as *Dabballee* among the *Maccaa* and *Tuulamaa)* Gadaa-grades to take part in *Foollee* (ritual song and dance). (It is important to bear in mind that the "*Dabballee"* of *Maccaa* and *Tuulamaa* in Gadaa literature refers to *Ittimakoo*). They form small touring ritual excitement bands also known as *foollee*. The *foollee* (band) of the *Qondaala* usually has ten to twenty members among the *Maccaa* and *Tuulamaa* Oromo. The *foollee* (band) of the *Ittimakoo* is usually smaller. The *foollee* of the former is known as senior *foollee* and that of the latter is known as junior *foollee*. The senior *foollee* goes around the dominion of the local polity singing and dancing. It must visit every host of *Buttaa* in its dominion. It is an exhausting ritual duty that takes place usually during the rainy season, but necessary. In addition to the ritual requirement of *Buttaa*, doing so is a requirement for the *Qondaalaa* to introduce themselves to the community and to build a relationship within the group and between and among the groups. They traverse the region, far-and-wide, in search of the hosts of *Buttaa*. The junior *foollee* is however limited to smaller locality because of the youth age of its members. Wherever there is *Buttaa*, there is *foollee*.

Buttaa is the main Gadaa passage rites performed by the incoming *Luba*. It involves ritual feast offered to the public by the *Luba* in-group and individually. It is an expensive feast: it involves, among others, slaughtering bulls, sheep, and goats for meat, preparation of exotic cultural and ritual foods, and brew of variety of drinks. The feast may go on for weeks and months. The deprived among the *Maccaa* Oromo "slaughter" symbolically bunches of reeds instead of animals (Gidada, 2016). As the date of the power transfer approaches, the *Buttaa* celebration would become more intense and mandatory. During the last year, every *Luba* in waiting, including the *Abbaa Gadaa* in waiting, must hold at least one group and one private *Buttaa* celebration with an extended feast. It is a feast offered particularly to the *foollee* band among the *Maccaa* and *Tuulamaa*. Similarly, N*yaachisa* (ritual banquet) is offered to the *Gaammee Gurguddaa* (*Qondaala*) of *Boorana*. *Buttaa* and *Nyaachisa* are the same[3], and both take place around the power transfer ceremonies. But *Buttaa* it is offered twice among some Oromo polities. Among the *Maccaa* Oromo, for example, it is offered at the passage rites from *Raaba* to *Raabaa Doorii* where it is known as welcoming *Buttaa* (*buttaa qabachuu*) and from *Raabaa Doorii* to *Luba* where it is known as sending off *Buttaa* (*buttaa baasuu*). The first is not mandatory but the latter is.

During these feasts, the *foollee* would be typical customers of the host: according to tradition and Gadaa laws, the host should not disappoint them. The host must welcome the *foollee* and satisfy them according to tradition. Depending on their welcome and service, according to the customs and tradition of *Buttaa*, the touring *foollee* may promote or chastise the hosts. Once at the home of the host, the *foollee* has the custom of receiving food and drink according to established standards. There are separate standards for the senior and the junior *foollee*. They may also be given gifts of live animals. Sometimes the senior *foollee* drive such animals along with them to promote the generous *Buttaa* celebrant. In case they are denied what was due to them or their customs were not fulfilled, the *foollee* could admonish the host. They often do. A fully satisfied *foollee* would promote the host wherever it goes. This may help the host not only to build a lasting impression and good reputation in the community but also to win some senior advisory position in the upcoming Gadaa governments or during passing through the semi-retired grades.

The senior *foollee* (troupe composed mainly of *Qondaalaa*) also plays some constructive role in the society during *Buttaa* seasons. They take

responsibility for fiercely defending the local land and culture from intruders. The *foollee* may chase away from Oromo land organized aliens who have transgressed the Gadaa laws or have committed crimes. They do so as part of irregular defense commonly known as *Buttaa* wars[4]. They scrutinize the governing Gadaa, to which their Gadaa is an opposition, and its *Abbaa Gadaa*. They express their own opinions in public but based on good ground and within the allowance of the culture of the Gadaa System. They stand guard to the Gadaa principles, customs, and values. They also serve as an agent of social justice.

The *foollee* has full freedom of expression and speech within the law. They are free to express themselves however they want. They are encouraged to question everything, challenge the *status quo*, and demand explanations on social, economic, cultural, legal, and political issues that affect them. They may sometimes transgress customary moral and ethical law and commit wrongs unwittingly. The *Abbaa Gadaa*, the Gadaa Council, the *Qaalluu* or the public, may reprimand them for doing so, but they are not punished.

Foollee, as touring troupe of teenagers, is not exclusive to members of *Qondaala* or *Ittimakoo* grade of Gadaa. The members of *Qeerroo* age-set (16–24 years old) or *Ijoollee* age-set (8-16), who are not *Qondaala* or *Ittimakoo* could also be part of the senior or the junior *foollee* group, respectively. Nevertheless, the non-*Qondaala Qeerroo* or non-*Ittimakoo Ijoollee* cannot form a *foollee* group alone. Traditionally, a *foollee* band must have a majority rightful member in it. Headdress made of the mane of lion or baboons distinguishes the rightful members in a *foollee*. The privilege to form and leading a *foollee* band rests with the *Qondaala* or the *Ittimakoo*.

1.3.3.2. Election of *Hayyuu Aduulaa*

The *Qondaala* grade culminates with the election of the leaders of the grade, leadership formation. The election is complementary to the *luba* formation. It is not *luba* formation itself contrary to some assertions in Gadaa literature. The *luba* (the Gadaa genealogical generation) is formed at the time of initiation of its newest members at the group naming ceremony of the *Dabballee*. The *Ittimakoo* are the first initiates: by them, the new Gadaa genealogical generation, *luba*, was instituted. The *Qondaala* are the second Gadaa grade after the *luba* formation.

The *Buttaa* season is an opportunity for the *Qondaalaa* grade to prepare for the election of its leader. After the initial get-together, the *Qondaala* institute *wal-argii* and *wal-dhaggii*. The first begins immediately after the members of the Gadaa grade (*miseensa*) first meet, which is during the first round of the previous *Buttaa* season. It is a form of a bachelor's party where one member invites others to his parent's place for festivities. On this occasion, they introduce their parents, and the parents share their experiences with them in the form of leadership training and knowledge parting. The second begins when they are in the middle of their Gadaa grade, in the second round of the previous *Buttaa* season. It is a form of idea sharing by carefully listening to each other. It is a formal meeting of heads of the peers where the formative years of their leadership begin. During these seasons, also they sing and dance together according to the prescribed ritual of *Foollee* or *Mukkee*. After they have known each other very well through *wal-argii* and *wal-dhaggii*, the *foollee* or *Mukkee* joint activities, and other group activities, it becomes clear that some of them have good leadership skills or are well prepared to be leaders. Soon after the *Buttaa* season, the power transfer took place, candidates are listed either by nomination or by volunteering. The volunteers often present themselves as a candidate during the *foollee* months. Former *Abbaa Gadaas* of the party, the current *Abbaa Gadaa*, leaders of the *gosa*, local elders, and the *hayyuu* have referent powers to endorse the nominees. In the middle of the second half of their Gadaa grade, around the sixth year, the campaign for the election of their grade leader (*hayyuu Aduulaa*) follows.

During the *Qondaala* grade, leadership competition is one of the main political activities. Those *Qondaala* who have assessed that they could win the election, start a formal election campaign in earnest. The official election campaign, *sirrisa*, is very intense. It usually takes six months. Members of the family of the contesting *Qondaalaa* take an active role in organizing events and assisting the candidates during the campaign. A father of a contesting *Qondaala,* who is in *Yuba II* grade takes a special interest in the election of his son to the office. If he had been *Abbaa Gadaa* and left the office with a good reputation, his son could have a slightly better chance to win against someone whose father had not been *Abbaa Gadaa*. He promotes his first "right born" son for the election on important occasions during the campaign period.

The last month of the last year of the *Qondaala* grade is the most critical year of the election campaign. It begins with the construction of temporary

campaign shades at prominent places in the region. Usually, the members of the local clan construct such campaign shades. Black, red, and white flags mark and decorate the shades and the path toward them. The shade serves both as a campaign stage, as singing and dancing place, and as dining halls. The clan members, usually the close lineage groups, bring food to the shade for all participants. The *Qondaala* do not leave the shade before the final election. They campaign for themselves: make election speech and narrate the history of their families and their relations with Gadaa leadership. In his speech, the contesting *Qondaala* makes clear why and how he is a better candidate than others are. His father, too, campaigns for him by giving testimonies on the character and upbringing of his son. Both must follow the customary campaign rules and decorum as well as social and moral norms. The campaigns are conducted among consecutive rituals that take place in the shade. During the last week of the campaign at the shades, the *Qondaala* dance with their parents and friends in between the campaign discourses.

The *Qaalluu* (the election observers), local elders (*Jaarsa biyyaa*), and some party members (*hayyuu gosaa*) administer and observed the elections. The former are apolitical and independent religious leaders. They are barred from taking part in politics both by law and by custom. They are neutral to all parties and all candidates. They are however interested in making the election free and fair so that the will of the people is processed properly. In general, the *Qaalluu* institution functions as the electoral board or commission and as civil societies of modern democracies. The local election *ad hoc* committee is composed of highly regarded and trusted local council elders, *Jaarsa biyyaa*. They check the election laws, norms, and procedures, including prayer rituals, which are implemented properly. They make sure the election procedures and processes have been followed as per the established laws and rules. The *hayyuu gosa* may also make valuable observations. Their interest would be the prevention of any rigging.

Traditionally, the candidates are expected not only to claim to have competencies but also to prove them. Their competencies are what they would like to sell to the electorates. The electorates consider many aspects of the candidate including personal (intellectual, social, military, emotional) competences, sound family background (history of leadership and successes of the father, grandfather, etc. in the Gadaa government), knowledge of Gadaa system (history, institutions, laws, and government), leadership skill

(patience, persuasion, wisdom, reconciliation, and peace-making, readiness to learn), courage and determination, kindness and generosity, eloquence, physical fitness and health, emotional intelligence, respect for *Waaqa* and *safuu*, and morality. Candidates are expected to supply competitive proofs of these qualities and show other worthy qualities during the three to six months of the intensive campaign season.

This election is however the first round of the election process. It can be referred to as a horizontal nomination election. This is because the election simply nominates six candidates from among members of the Gadaa grade that crosscut kinship structure. It nominates candidates from among which the three future *Abbaa Gadaa*s shall be elected at a letter stage, in the second round of the election. The second round of election would take place sixteen years from now, at the transition time from *Raaba* to *Doorii*. Then, the representatives of the all lineage structure (the *gosa*) shall elect the three *Abbaa Gadaa*s form among the six *hayyuu Aduulaa*, leaving the last privilege to pick the First *Abbaa Gadaa* from the three to the *gosa* from which the next *Abbaa Gadaa* should be elected, according to the convention. Other parties would not recognize the election until the subsequent confirmation by the *Caffee* (see more on the second round of the election in the discussion of the *Raaba* Grade in section 1.3.5.).

However, in some Oromo communities, such as *Boorana* of southern Ethiopia, there is a tradition that assumes erroneously the contender who won the majority votes in the election of *hayyuu Aduulaa* at the end of *Qondaala* Grade (known as *Gaammee Gurguddaa* in *Boorana*) would routinely become the First *Abbaa Gadaa*. The next rounds of the election are considered confirmation or rubberstamping of the first round of the election. This is more likely than not, but it is not always the case in Boorana, nor has it been a universal assumption or practice among the Oromo polities. Even though one wins by an exceeding large margin in the first round of the election, emerging characters and contents of the candidate may prove otherwise through time. To become the First *Abbaa Gadaa*, the candidate must win the majority at the next rounds of election by sustaining a winning campaign and demonstrating his excelling competence to his peer, members of his party, and the community in the meantime. Those *hayyuu Aduulaa* who won the first three top ranks in the first round of election continue to compete constructively to win the favor of their party and the community to

become First *Abbaa Gadaa*. In the end, the most competent of the *hayyuu Aduulaa* becomes First *Abbaa Gadaa* after a variety of votes.

Every *Qondaala* of the Oromo polity conducts the election of its *hayyuu Aduulaa* just before the transition to the next grade, *Kuusa*. In the end, as many *hayyuu Aduulaa* (it may also be referred to as *hayyuu Qondaala*) as there are self-governing Oromo polities are elected, i.e., every Oromo political entity that practices Gadaa System elects its council of *hayyuu Aduulaa*. At the end of the *Qondaala* grade, which is also the end of the election campaign, and during the sessions of the *Caffee* assembly, six leaders (*hayyuu Aduulaa)*, are elected by members (*miseensa*) to lead them. The elected *hayyuu Aduulaa* are now leaders of their *luba* (genealogical generation) in the polity. They form the Gadaa Council and form the Gadaa government, twenty years later, in a four-year staggered succession.

The election of *hayyuu Aduulaa* involves all the *Qondaala* (*miseensa*) at the grass-root structures of the polity. The Oromo polity is organized into two equal-halves, moieties, and structured into major moieties (for example, *Booranaa and Baarentuu*), sub-moieties (for example, *Maccaa* and *Tuulamaa*), junior-moieties (for example, *Sabbo* and *Gonna*), etc. Usually, the last structure is built from two balanced junior moieties. The Gadaa government of such dual moieties is the local (lowest) level of government. Every local political unit of the Oromo has *Qondaala* at any given Gadaa period. The local polity is divided vertically into junior moieties, *gosa* (clan), *qomoo* (sub-clan), *warra* (extended relations), *balbala* (clusters of close relations), or to regions, districts, sub-districts, counties, cluster of neighborhoods (villages), and neighborhoods respectively. The *Qondaala* of all the lowest units, in effect the *Qondaala* of all units, take part in the election of their leaders, *hayyuu*.

Such massive participation of the *Qondaala* in the election of its leaders is the basis of the legitimacy of the leaders in the eyes of the *Caffee*. Even though it is a nomination election at this grade, such extensive participation, and the democratic process form the legitimate basis for the *Caffee* to endorse the elected representative and proclaim them leaders of their *miseensa*. The same would be the basis by which the *Caffee* shall hold a distribution election where it elects three of the six to one First and two Second *Abbaa Gadaas* sixteen years later.

The mechanism of voting in the Gadaa System may vary from time to time and from place to place. In the 16th century, Bahrey (an Abyssinian monk) contrasted the making (election) of the republican *Abbaa Gadaa* of the

Oromo with the hereditary appointment of Abyssinian kings (Bahrey [1598] cited in Baissa, 2004). In the 18th century, the western Oromo communities employed a "variety of votes" in suffrages (Bruce, 1791). In the mid-19th century, among some Oromo communities, the candidates stood side by side in public on the election date to receive the votes: an electorate places a bunch of green grass on the head of his favorite candidate (D' Abbadie, 2007 [1880]). Elections are made both in secrete in public. Secrete elections are made in the ritual halls of the *Qaalluu* in front of the *Qaalluu* or the Council of the *Qaalluu*s, the spiritual election observers. The observer announces the results of such votes. Formal public voting, however, is by showing hands, which the Oromo call "*quba baasuu" or "qubaan filuu"* (raising a finger or choosing by a finger). In such votes, everybody present is an observer, and results are announced without a delay.

The elected *hayyuu Qondaala/Aduulaa* represent only their own members (*miseensa*) in the polity during the subsequent *Kuusa* and *Raaba* grades. Readers should bear in mind that only one-fifth of the Oromo population belongs to one party, and such elections take place among one of the ten Gadaa-grades of this one-fifth of the members of the polity. The elected *hayyuu Qondaala* represents only this group, about two percent of the population until they shall become *Luba* leaders (*Abbaa Gadaa*) of the whole members of their respective polity. They become *Abbaa Gadaa* by taking power officially at the Gadaa power transfer ceremony.

Before the transition rite concludes, the *hayyuu Qondaala* spend one week in seclusion (*ulmaa*). The purpose is to receive counseling without any disruption. While in seclusion, they are not allowed to speak but listen carefully and attentively to the elite senior elders (*fooyyee*) from their respective clan. These elders could be former *Abbaa Gadaas* who are best known for their wisdom. They could also be legal scholars (senior *hayyuu*), oral historians, or time-reckoners (*ayyaantuu*). Their main target would be helping the elected *hayyuu* to grasp fully the issues at hand, *tolfata biyyaa* (public interests). These may include political, social, legal, economic, and military issues. The *fooyyee* may also advise the new *hayyuu* on the Gadaa government itself, on its structure, institutions, and powers. The elected young *hayyuu*s would consider these issues seriously during their leadership. At the end of the seclusion period, their peers welcome them with joy, singing, and dancing. They bless them and wish them success, as do their parents.

The *Qondaala* grade concludes with the public announcement of the six *hayyuu Qondaala*. The public announcement is known as *lallaba*, proclamation. It takes place at the presence of the governing *Abbaa Gadaa* and the *Qaalluu (Abbaa Muudaa)* during the *Caffee* assembly (see *Figure 1.6*). The elected *hayyuu* are proclaimed to the anxiously waiting *Caffee* that has convened in the middle of the current Gadaa government. The herald takes high ground and names the elected *hayyuu*. By this act, the Gadaa government that would take the office of the *Abbaa Gadaa* twenty years from now is seeded. The *Qaalluu* and messengers (heralds) take the news across the country on foot and horsebacks so that every member of the polity is informed properly (Reclus, 1890).

The *hayyuu Aduulaa* would become career leaders until their full retirement at the end of the *Gadamoojjii* grade, the last Gadaa grade. Their life would be shaped gradually through training, education, culture, and customs to that end. The society prepares them very well for the next twenty years so that they would be able to serve the public interests (*tolfata biyyaa*) very well when some of them would become *Abbaa Gadaa* at the *Luba* grade and afterward when they could be semi-retired councilors to the Gadaa government.

1.3.4. Grade IV: *Kuusa*

The name of the fourth Gadaa grade is *Kuusa*. As the name *Kuusa* – meaning 'accumulation,' 'buildup,' 'potential' – implies, this grade is the grade for accumulation and development of potentials, competences, and wealth. It is the Gadaa grade for arduous work in all aspects of life.

The *Kuusa* grade begins officially by transfer of office between *hayyuu Qondaala* and *hayyuu Kuusaa*. At the transition, the former moves to the office of the latter while the latter move forward to the next grade and take the office of *Raaba*. Only *hayyuu Kuusa* who have proven themselves worthy of the office would continue to occupy the office of *hayyuu Kuusaa* for the eight years. If any of them fails to discharge his duty as a leader, or has departed due to accident or illness, competitive replacement elections would be held.

The *Kuusa* wear a hairstyle where they maintain a tuft (*guutuu*) on the upper part of their skull and shave or cut short the rest part of the hair. Any form of hairstyle that leaves slightly longer hair on the upper front part of the head is *guutuu*. Traditionally, members of the *Qondaala* may also wear this

hairstyle if they have committed a heroic[5] act, such as singlehandedly killing an enemy in combat or killing large and dangerous game during hunting season. With its modern touches, presently g*uutuu* is the most common type of male hairstyle around the world.

The *hayyuu Kuusaa* receives separate and specialized leadership training under the supervision of the incumbent Gadaa government. The governing Gadaa Council must assign the most respected experts and trainers (Hinew, 2012). The training involves both the training of the mind and the body. The medium for the former is problem-centered philosophical thinking within the Gadaa political ideology and trust in *Waaqa* according to the tenets of *Waaqeffannaa*. The medium of the later is the body of the *hayyuu*. They undergo rigorous physical training within the natural setting and on practical problems but excluded from the regular day-to-day life of the community. The trainers may take them to remote areas for such training. The Oromo believe that both body and mind need to be trained very well in the chorus for all the necessary wisdom and skills to make a better Gadaa leader. Such training would continue in the next grade as well when they become *hayyuu Raaba*.

The *Kuusa* grade, in general, is the most demanding Gadaa grade. The *Kuusa* train hard physically to be fit; they learn hard to become intellectuals on relevant fields; they work hard to accumulate private property that could sustain the family that they would soon form. They would continue the military training that they had begun at the earlier grade. They would learn practical military skills. This may include weaponry, tactics, scouting, and guerrilla warfare. They would learn laws, history, traditional medicine, time reckoning (Oromo calendar), oratory, Oromo philosophy, etc. They would start to have more property that is private in addition to the gifts that they have received. They do so by apportioning their labor contribution to their family, and by engaging in local business activities.

The *Kuusa* are also terribly busy building love relationships with their future partners. Both boys and girls can have publicly observed osculating lovers starting from the age of twenty-four in Oromo society, but they may marry only when the man is thirty-two and may beget children after reaching the age of forty. The *Kuusa* have eight years to find their right mate and build the relationship so that they could marry her for life, according to the Oromo family law *(Rakoo)* at the right time.

The *Kuusa* are apprentice warriors. They correspond with the *Dargaggoo* age-set, 24–32 years of age. The Gadaa government could enlist them as regular fighters in case an ongoing war required massive mobilization. In such cases, they could be organized under their *hayyuu* or the *Abbaa Cibraa* of the corresponding age-set. The *Abbaa Duulaa* may also organize and coordinate them with the *Luba* regiments. The *Kuusa*, in principle, do not organize military campaigns of their own; they are still trainees.

The *hayyuu Kuusaa*, the elected leaders, would undergo extensive leadership reviews and pieces of training. They take an audit of the performances of the recent Gadaas (parties). They also take an audit of the performances of their party (their Gadaa) in the last couple of rounds. In doing so, they learn lessons from history. Besides, they draw lessons from the governing Gadaa. They also receive analytical inputs from the retired *Abbaa Gadaa* and social leaders, elders. They receive regular pieces of leadership training from retired *Abbaa Gadaas* and wise men. More importantly, their fathers who have campaigned hard for their election at the end of the *Qondaala* grade take the responsibility to train their sons duly for leadership success.

1.3.5. Grade V: *Raaba*

The name of the fifth Gadaa grade is *Raaba*. Due to the practice of staggered succession (see discussion under sections 1.3.6.1., 2.2.12, and 3.8.6.) to power between parties, this Gadaa grade is extended usually, for four years. This extended period is not a Gadaa grade, but a class of Raabaa. It has a separate name. It is known variably as *Raaba Doorii*, *Raaba Gadaa*, or simply as *Doorii* or *Dooroma*.

The transition from *Kuusa* grade to *Raaba* grade is similar to the transition from *Qondaala* grade to *Kuusaa* grade. The *hayyuu Kuusaa* takes over the office of *hayyuu Raaba* of the preceding party. The *hayyuu Kuusaa* of the succeeding party become *hayyuu Raaba*: their peers (*miseensa*) become *Raaba*.

The transition from *Kuusaa* to *Raaba* is marked by marriage. All members marry and form a family. Their marriage must be according to the law of *Rakoo*, the family law of the Gadaa System that governs sanctified first marriage between the bachelor *Raaba* and his *qarree* wife. The *qarree* wife is expected to be a virgin. The Oromo culture allows and encourages girls and boys to have publicized osculating lover (*dhungoo*) before marriage but

discourages very strongly having sexual intercourse before marriage. Only those who are married could become *Luba*.

After the transition, the *hayyuu Raaba* start to reside in a communal village. The village is known as *Ollaa Abrooraa* in southern *Booranaa*, *Qacchaa* in *Gujii, Yaa'a gabalaa* in *Karrayyuu*, and *Gooroo* among *Maccaa*. It serves as the headquarters of the *Raaba*. This headquarters would become the seat of the Gadaa government when members pass to the *Luba* grade and take state power. Recruited members defend the headquarters and protect the *hayyuu*s. The *hayyuu* would also have assistants and messengers.

The *Raaba* grade has unique characters. It is the longest grade in staggered succession. The *hayyuu Raaba* shall take power from the incumbent *Abbaa Gadaas* after twelve years from now. During the first four years of the twelve years, there are two groups of *Raaba* (see Table 1.5*, Figure 1.6, and Figure 3.7*): one belonging to the preceding and one of the succeeding party. The *Raaba* of the preceding party is the senior *Raaba*, *Raaba Doorii*. It would become *Luba* after four years. Against them, the *Raaba* of the succeeding party is junior *Raaba*. During the first eight years, the Raaba are regular. After eight years, however, they are no more regular but stay *Raaba* so long as they have not transitioned to *Luba* grade. They become Senior *Raaba,* also known as *Raaba Doorii, Dooroma,* or *Raaba Gadaa*. Hence, there are two categories of *Raaba* of the same party during the twelve years (see *Figure 1.6*, *Figure 3.7*). These extended twelve years of *Raaba* grade and the overlap of the *Raaba* of two preceding and succeeding parties for one-third of the grades occur because of the staggered succession.

Raaba grade is planning grade of the upcoming Gadaa government. First, the *hayyuu Raaba* would try to reconcile the advice that they had received from the elite elders (*Jaarsa biyyaa*) of their respective polity while in seclusion at the *Qondaala* and *Kuusa* grades with their own socio-political and jurisdictional programs. They also consult with the elected clan leaders on the interest of the people they stand for. Soon, they begin to develop policies, strategies, and draft laws that they would introduce to solve the identified issues by the time they would take the state power in the next grade. Historically, offensive-defensive wars were also planned at this grade.

All members of the *Raaba* grade, at all classes, have military and law enforcement roles. At the time of war, they serve in the military under the *Abbaa Duulaa*, the commander-in-chief of the traditional army of the Gadaa government. They make up a junior warrior's segment. They may be

regimented together with the *Cibraa* of the corresponding age-set. At the time of peace, they continue advanced warfare training. They also take responsibility to keep law and order as per the laws. They take the responsibility of community policing and facilitation of the *Afarsaataa*, a criminal investigation and community policing system. The community looks upon them for crime prevention, maintenance of peace and order, and protection of communal properties, and defense against local organized crimes. The *Raaba* have institutional and social responsibilities to do so. Doing so would help them prove themselves and their future government on respecting the Gadaa laws, the culture, and traditions of the community.

The *Raaba* usually wear a narrow band of red fabric around their head. It distinguishes them in the public and from the *Gaheessa* age-set (32–40 years of age) that also wear such a white band of fabric. It skirts just under the hair on the forehead and above the ears. This is to distinguish themselves from non-*Raaba* age mates, who are not on the duty of law enforcement as they are. They let the hair grow to become *afroo*. Traditionally, they insert their wooden finger comb between the band and their head on their right temple.

The whole reputation of their future government of the present *Raaba* might depend on how effectively and efficiently they discharge their roles and responsibilities at this grade. How praiseworthy they are in their military and law enforcement services at this grade shall have a direct effect on how popular their government would be. When they would become the governing party, their *hayyuus* would become *Abbaa Gadaas*. They would become not only *Abbaa Gadaas* of the *luba*, which represents only one-fifth of the polity (only their Gadaa party) but also *Abbaa Gadaas* of the entire polity.

While serving the community, the *Raaba* would continue to learn. They would comprehend the Oromo calendar (time reckoning and forecasting) known as *dhaha*, Oromo philosophical reasoning (*ilaa-fi-ilaamee*), Gadaa constitution and laws (*heera fi seera*), the functions and responsibilities of the Gadaa government and its institutions, and the relationships among *aadaa* (culture), Gadaa and *amantaa* (religion). As they become *Raaba Doorii* (senior *Raaba*), such learning becomes intense. By the time they would take over the power from their predecessors, the *Raaba*, in general, would have become one of the most knowledgeable members of the Oromo society.

At the *Raaba Doorii* class, in addition to the continued general knowledge instructions, the *hayyuu Raaba* are given specialized training on the Oromo calendar. This involves training on reading and interpreting heavenly bodies and predictive astrology where the night sky is studied like a well-illustrated textbook; the date system where every day of the lunar month has its name; the season system where dates of the transition between seasons are not fixed but predicted within historical dates; the climatic forecast system based on historic recurrences of dry and wet seasons and the memorized length of each; and the weather forecast system based on the change of direction of wind and change of temperature. They would also learn about all the holidays and their respective rituals. The most knowledgeable retired *Abbaa Gadaas,* the *hayyuu,* the *ayyaantuu* (time reckoners), the *raga* (prophets, seers, sage, forecasters), and the *Qaalluu* (spiritual leaders) join hand in training the *Raaba Doorii* on the complex Oromo calendar and its associations.

The passage rite from regular *Raaba* to *Raaba Doorii* is *Daannisa*. Traditionally, it involved circumcision, seclusion, ear piercing, and performing a series of cleansing rituals both at home and in a field. It marks the beginning of the period of begetting children. The beginning of the *Raaba* grade is where the members get married. They are however not allowed to have children until they become *Raaba Doorii*, i.e., until they had celebrated the *Daannisa* (Fatherhood ceremony).

Begetting children before the *Daannisa* ceremony had profound consequences. Historically, as mentioned above, when children were born to a junior and regular *Raaba* (before *Daannisa* ceremony), they were abandoned or given for adoption. Since recent times, however, not only the rule seems to have been relaxed but also laws against such acts have been legislated by the modern state. Presently, younger Oromo people who have not yet reached *Raaba Doorii* class beget children. This is quite common, particularly in urban centers.

Nonetheless, the *Raaba* are still highly recommended not to raise children before they had celebrated their fatherhood ceremony. Fatherhood ceremony is celebrated at the age of forty for an ideal "right born." It is a transition rite from regular *Raaba* grade to *Raaba Doorii* class. After the fatherhood ceremony, the family could have as many children as possible but only those who would be born within the eight years' time would be born *Dabballee*. The rest would become "late-born." Yet, it is recommended strongly to have *male* children born *Dabballee*.

In staggered succession, *the Daannisa* ceremony is not a transition right from *Raaba* to *Luba* (see Table 1.5.), nor do the *hayyuu Raaba* or the *miseensa* (members) change their titles. People who are not aware of the staggering succession system might think the *Daannisa* ceremony is a transition rite from *Raaba* to *Luba*. It is a marker of the time to start begetting ideal "right born" children. Unlike the previous two transitions where the *hayyuu Qondaala* becomes *hayyuu Kuusaa* and the *hayyuu Kuusaa* become *hayyuu Raaba* after eight years, the *hayyuu Raaba* remain *hayyuu Raaba* for four more years. In some cases, as among the *Boorana* of southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya, for example, it is for five years (Legesse, 2006).

The *Raaba Doorii* are the most energetic warriors. They are at the tiptop of their military competence. Until the power transfer, they fight under the command of the *Abbaa Duulaa* of the governing party. Based on the bravery and the leadership they prove; members may compete for the position of *Abbaa Duulaa* in their Gadaa government when they take over state power. A warrior with exceptional bravery, leadership skill, and physical and mental fitness would be elected *Abbaa Duulaa* of the incoming Gadaa government.

1.3.5.1. Election of *Abbaa Gadaa*

The election of the First *Abbaa Gadaa* is the most important election in the Gadaa System. It involves multiple stages of the election over an extended period. The first stage is the election of *hayyuu Aduulaa* at the end of *Qondaala* Grade as discussed under section 1.3.3.2 (also, see *Figure 1.5.*, Election Period A). Here, the six members were elected in proportion to the dual moieties, the two kinship structures, and in as much as possible, in proportion or turn of the *gosa* to be elected to the *Aduulaa* Council. The mode of the contest was personal competencies. The second stage is the election of the three *Abbaa Gadaa*s of the upcoming Gadaa government takes place at the end of regular *Raaba*, during the *Caffee* assembly. It takes place sixteen years after the first stage of the election. Unlike the first stage of selection which is a party-based election, it is kinship (vertical) election. It takes place publicly during the *Caffee* session. Delegates (representatives) of all kinships apply multiple votes to nominate three of the *hayyuu Aduulaa* for the three top offices (*Gadaa Sadeen*) of the upcoming Gadaa government. It is a simple election of three out of six without assignment of rank among them. This writer refers to this election as a vertical nominative election

because the election only nominates three out of six. The third stage election takes place shortly after the second stage nomination election. Representatives of the *Gosa* from which the upcoming *Abbaa Gadaa* is being elected make another round of votes. The vote is to elect the First *Abbaa Gadaa* from the three (*Gadaa Sadeen*) nominees. The chosen nominee is, then, communicated to the assembly. This writer refers to this election as a distributive election because it distributes powers related to leadership and ritual precedence among the three Gadaas. The three *Gadaa*s shall have the same vote on decisions. In fact, all six members of the Gadaa Council (*Aduulaa* Council) have equal voting and veto powers, and all of them must be present during important decisions. The privileges of the First *Abbaa Gadaa* include chairpersonship, ritual pre-eminence, and having the Gadaa government in his name.

James Bruce captured vividly the second and the third stage election in the 18th century. Even though not entirely right on numbers and nomenclatures that are corrected in the square brackets, Bruce (1791) explains:

> The council of each of the seven tribes [*Gosa*] first meets separately in its own councils [*Gosa* Council]. Here it determines how many are necessary to be left behind for the governing, guarding, and cultivating the territory, while those fixed upon by many votes go as delegates to meet the representatives of the other nations [*Gosa*] at the domicile, or head-quarters of the king [*Abbaa Bokkuu*/*Abbaa Gadaa*], among the tribe [*Gosa*] from which the sovereign [*Abbaa Gadaa*/*Abbaa Bokkuu*] of the last seven [eight] years was taken. Here they sit down under a tree [*Odaa*] . . . After a variety of votes, the number of candidates is reduced to four [three], and the suffrage of six of these nations [*Gosa*] go then no farther; but the seventh, whose turn it is to have a king [*Abbaa Bokkuu*/*Abbaa Gadaa*] out of their tribe [*Gosa*], choose, from among the four [three], one, whom they crown with a garland of Wanzey [*Odaa*], and put a sceptre, or bludgeon, of that wood in his hands, which they call Buco [*Bokkuu*]. (pp. 403–404)

The fourth stage of the election is the legitimization of the election by the Caffee assembly. The assembly of the multitude (*Caffee*) evaluates the First *Abbaa Gadaa*-elect at length. Unless it finds a woeful flaw in the election

or in the character and content of the nominee, the assembly endorses the nomination. The nominee becomes First *Abbaa Gadaa* elect. The assembly announces to the public that the nominee has been elected First *Abbaa Gadaa* of the upcoming Gadaa government. The elected First *Abbaa Gadaa*, *Abbaa Gadaa fiixxee* (also known by other names, such as *Abbaa Fugug* among the *Ituu* and *Humbanaa* of Harargie and *Abbaa Bokkuu* among the *Maccaa*) would become the chairperson of the Gadaa Council and head of the Gadaa government and the state four years later. The remaining two would chair the two auxiliary Gadaa Councils (see the discussion under section 3.3.2.6.). Together, the three would be known as *Gadaa sadeen*, also *waraana sadeen,* among the *Boorana*. They begin forming the Gadaa government and sharing apprentice powers from the current Gadaa government. For years from now, they will take over the state power from the incumbent Gadaa government at the *Baallii/Bokkuu* ceremony.

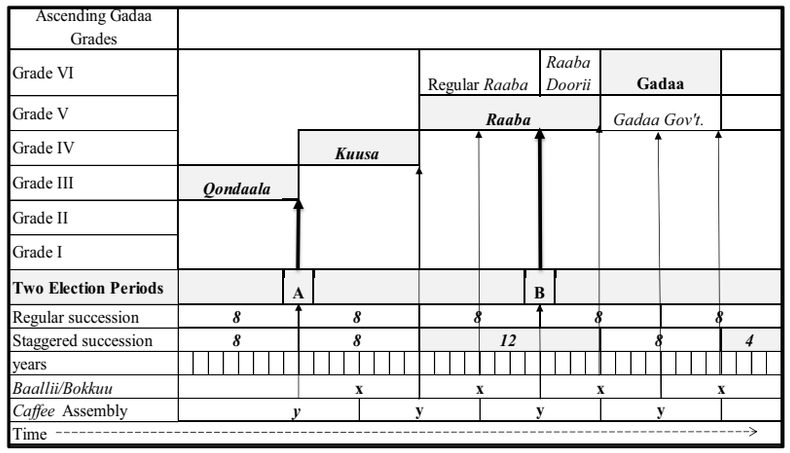


Figure 1.5. Two Election Periods to Elect Abbaa Gadaa

By stages of elections (see *Figure* 1.5, the first stage of election takes place at Election Period A, the rest at Election Period B), the leaders are transformed from the leadership of their own Gadaa grade (*miseensa*), which could be called peer-group for the expediency of understanding, to party leadership during the four-year *Raaba Doorii* period, and to the full leadership of the polity after taking state power at the power transfer (*baallii/bokkuu*) ceremony. Being party leadership involves being a leader for the party. This may well go beyond the *Raaba* and *Luba* grade. They would continue to be

the leaders of their party after *Luba* grade until new leadership would be elected at the end of *Qondaala* grade of the Gadaa of the generation of their sons. Being the leader of the polity involves being leaders for all the members of the five established Oromo parties, and for all other peoples who live among the society. Every Oromo must be a member of one of the five parties. Other peoples who live among the Oromo are not members of the Gadaa parties. Historically, they were members of the casts of handicrafts workers and traders who lived among the Oromo peacefully and were protected by the Gadaa laws. Presently, this group includes settlers who have arrived in Oromia in Ethiopia from former Abyssinia Proper, northern Ethiopia, and other parts of modern Ethiopia. The elected Gadaa leaders also become *de facto* leaders of these groups of peoples.

The newly elected three *Gadaas* and the remaining members of the *Aduulaa* form the future Gadaa Council and start apprentice leadership training with the governing Gadaa Council. Among the *Karrayyuu*, after two years, the governing Gadaa Council delegates some actual power to them so that they could test themselves on its practical exercise before resuming full power. Among the *Boorana*, they would take full state power to govern the polity at the *baallii/bokkuu* ceremony four years after the election, i.e., four years after they had been elected and announced as the next leaders of the polity, all the party. Thus, the *Raaba Doorii period* (Gadaa government in waiting) grade culminates with the *baallii/bokkuu* ceremony, a state power handover ceremony.

1.3.5.2. Election of Military leaders

In Gadaa System, military leaders are also elected parallel to the election of *Abbaa Gadaa* and elected to serve only one Gadaa period. The political element in the election of the military leader is that they belong to the party that forms the Gadaa government under which they shall serve. The party neither nominates them nor elects them directly. They are self-made nominees and they are elected by the *Gosa* Assembly, assembly of clans of the polity. This round of election is the vertical election. Thus, there could be as many *Abbaa Duulaas* as the number of clans in the polity. Only the one that excels the most based on demonstrated competence, for example by having had won at a battle against the enemy, could be the chief *Abbaa Duulaa*. This could be by implied approval of the elected *Abbaa Duulaas*,

without contest, or by formal leadership contest among them by rounds of elimination election. This round of election becomes a horizontal election. Similarly, other subordinate military leaders are also elected by lower kinship levels. *Jabaa Warraa*, for example, is an elected military leader of *Warraa*. The *Warraa* elect them. *Abbaa Cibra* are military leaders elected by the warrior age-sets institutions. The election of *Abbaa Cibara*, unlike *Abbaa Duulaa* and *Jabaa Waraa* is horizontal. Members of all the five parties, if they belong to the age-set from which they are elected, elect the *Abbaa Cibra*. The elected *Abbaa Duulaa* commands and coordinates the *Cibra* and *Jabaa* military leaders and their squadrons with the *Raaba Dorii* and *Luba* warrior regiments.

The First *Abbaa Gadaa* also becomes a military leader at the time of critical defensive war. When his credentials warrant a magnanimous warrior, the war is of higher significance (full-scale war), and rapid mobilization is necessary, he becomes the chief of the *Abbaa Duulaas*. Yet, all the power to declare war or peace, victory, or defeat rests with the *Caffee* unless it had delegated such power to the Gadaa Council anticipating the risk of holding the *Caffee* assembly at the time of war. Even then, the *Abbaa Gadaa* remains subordinate to the Gadaa Council.

1.3.6. Grade VI: *Luba/*Gadaa

Luba/Gadaa is the most publicly visible Grade of the Gadaa System. Even though both *Luba* and *Gadaa* refer to the sixth Grade, this writer prefers to use *Luba* to minimize confusion of using this complex and multi-meaning name 'Gadaa.' Members, the *Luba*, make sure that the community identifies them readily. To this end, they follow typical dress code and public etiquettes. The dress of the *Luba* is white and traditional. Mostly, they wear a white shirt, white pairs of trousers or breeches, white turban, white *bullukkoo*[6] and leather sandals in public and on ritual occasions. They hold *horooroo* (decorated ritual rod from the time of their marriage) as a sign of their sovereignty, *alangaa* (whip) in their hands as a sign of lawmaker, and a bunch of *coqorsa* (evergreen grass) as a sign of peace on public and ritual occasions. They also wear checkered turbans and bright color breeches or pairs of trousers in parts of the Oromo country. The *Luba* always shave or cut their skull hair short except the tuft that they leave at the back-bottom or center of the head. They make a thin braiding of it usually in three interlocking bunches known as *guutuu* or *dunfura* and let it fly from under the turban. They

also have their earlobes pierced and ritual pendant earrings known as *lootii* are inserted. At all times, *Luba* are expected to be calm, thoughtful, and show understanding and leadership. They must behave themselves very well and prove the virtues of public etiquette and cultural values.

The clothing (dress code) of the elected *Abbaa Gadaas* is similar to the *Luba* but may vary slightly from polity to polity. In general, they are distinguished by *kallachaa* and *bokkuu*. They wear *kallachaa* on their forehead and carry *bokkuu* in their hands. When in Council or on Gadaa rituals the *bokkuu* is laid in a state or carried in procession before them. Among the *Maccaa* and *Tuulamaa* Oromo, the *Abbaa Gadaas* also cry ceremonial whip in their hands. Historically, as it is also upheld to date by some *Abbaa Gadaas* of the Gujii Oromo, they cover neither their head nor their feet, i.e., they do not wear shoes or huts during their tenure of office. They believe that the head of the *Abbaa Gadaa* must always remain open directly to *Waaqa* from above and his feet must always remain in touch with the earth from bellow.

Politically, *Luba* is the most important grade. It defines the Oromo polity and government. It is the grade when its members (*miseensa*) exercise overall leadership in the polity and its elected leaders take state power for eight years. Power transfer ceremonies and the midterm review of the Gadaa government by the *Caffee* dominate the political events of the *Luba* grade.

1.3.6.1. Power Transfers and Staggered Succession (*baallii/bokkuu*)

The power transfer is one of the most important ceremonies of the Gadaa System. It is a peaceful exchange of state power between the incoming and outgoing Gadaa Councils. It is known with different names including *baallii, bokkuu, kalaalaa, alangaa,* and *luugoo*. It involves the incoming and outgoing Gadaa (parties). This is because the staggered succession involves only the two, incoming and outgoing, Gadaas (parties). It takes place once every eight years; four years after the *Raaba* of the incoming party had become *Raaba Doorii,* i.e. four years after the fatherhood ceremony. At this time, the other consecutive three Gadaas/parties are four years into the *Raaba, Kuusa,* and *Qondaala* grades respectively (see *Figure 1.6*).

The power transfer ceremony begins with a joint reflection by both the incoming and outgoing Gadaa Councils. At the beginning of the festive season, the outgoing and incoming *Abbaa Gadaas* and their Councils go for a

one week of solitude. During the seclusion, the two groups do not communicate with family, friends, or the public nor can anyone visit them for any matter. This allows the two groups to discuss thoroughly significant issues of the nation with little or no interruption. The outgoing *Abbaa Gadaas* use this opportunity to pass on government secretes and offer serious advice from their experiences. The end of the seclusion is marked with an extended blessing ceremony.

The actual ceremony of the transfer of power begins with the arrival of the participants at the designated place and date. The place is the government center of the polity marked by *Odaa*. Such places, where power transfer takes place regularly, are known as *gooroo* Gadaa (center of operations of the Gadaa government). The *ayyaantuu,* time reckoners, determined date in each month. Because the ceremony is a cyclical event, the place is well known, and any member of the polity can approximate the date. The exact date is announced in advance. Members of the two parties, representatives of the remaining three parties, the *Qaalluu*, invited former *hayyuus*, and other dignitaries take part in the ceremony. In preparation, members of outgoing and incoming *Gadaa*s (parties) construct two temporary shelters close to each other at the place of the power transfer. The incoming First *Abbaa Gadaa* and outgoing First *Abbaa Gadaa* and their Councillors arrive at the respective shades with a sacrosanct procession. Their arrival marks the beginning of the long festivities.

After prayers and ritual blessing, the power handover takes place. Starting from the moment before the power transfer, the head of the *Qaalluu* (*Abbaa Muudaa*) and the outgoing *Abbaa Gadaa* lead the blessing and the ritual ceremony. Gradually however the incoming *Abbaa Gadaa* takes over. As a marker of the power transfer, the outgoing *Abbaa Gadaa* hands over the *bokkuu* to the incoming *Abbaa Gadaa*. Among the *Maccaa* Oromo, the outgoing *Abbaa Gadaa* places the *bokkuu* on a bunch of *Odaa* leaves on the ground: *bokkuu* must not touch the ground. While doing so, he pronounces, "I give the chairmanship of the *Caffee* to you." The incoming *Abbaa Gadaa* responds by saying, "Gadaa!" three times. The incoming *Abbaa Gadaa* picks up the *bokkuu* with his uncovered hands with a gesture of profound respect. Among the *Boorana* Oromo, the outgoing *Abbaa Gadaa* draws the *baallii* (the best of an ostrich feather) from his *ruufoo* (headdress) and transfers it to the *ruufoo* of the incoming *Abbaa Gadaa*. There are related acts among other Oromo communities. All these acts mark the apogee of the ceremony and

the very moment of power transfer. Once the *bokkuu* is lifted or the *baallii* is transferred, the incoming *Abbaa Gadaa* becomes the governing *Abbaa Gadaa* while the outgoing *Abbaa Gadaa* becomes *Yuba I*.

The symbolic significance of *bokkuu* cannot be overstated. It is the center of every public event among the Oromo. In connection with the explanation of the understanding of the power transfer among the Oromo of Harargie by Shaykh Baktii Saphalo (1895-1980), Hassen (2003) reflects:

> The bokku was a multi-purpose emblem (scepter) that was kept by the Abba Gada [*Abbaa Gadaa*], the president of democratically elected chafee [*Caffee*] assembly (Oromo parliament). It was a symbol of independence and insignia of political power. It was the revered emblem with which every Oromo public prayer started and ended, and with which all chafee [*Caffee*] assembly's deliberations on the making of law, declaration of war and making of peace started and ended. (p. 141)

The new *Abbaa Gadaa* takes the oath of office, which is an affirmation of the constitution of the office in the form of enumeration of major duties, expected personal character, leadership role, upholding the Gadaa Constitution and laws. In the end, he pronounces, "Gadaa is mine!" At this same moment, all the *Raaba Doorii* of the incoming Gadaa and all the *Luba* of the outgoing Gadaa pass to *Luba* and *Yuba* I grades respectively. The power transfer is now complete[7].

The new *Abbaa Gadaa* and his contingent ride or walk in ritual procession back to their shade with great joy, singing, and dancing. Upon their arrival, the festivity at their shade begins.

For the new *Abbaa Gadaa* and his *hayyuu* peers, it is the beginning of yet another intensive week. They go into one-week seclusion for consultation with the elites of their party. In addition to receiving advice, they also refine and polish their propositions as policy or as laws. They also appoint leaders of the institutions of the Gadaa government. At the end of the seclusion period, the new *Luba* is blessed in the good wish ceremony. Now, it is the time for the incoming Gadaa Council to uphold the *safuu* and the laws, and to make its leadership intentions clear to the public. At the end of the power transfer ceremony, the incoming *Abbaa Gadaa* and his Council uphold the moral and ethical laws (*safuu*), the oral constitution, and the existing laws. The new Gadaa Council may proclaim new laws on local and formerly

unaddressed legal issues, mostly punitive proclamations on new or aggravated crimes. The new proclamations of the incoming Gadaa Council would be subject to a formal review of the legislative *Caffee* after four years: the *Caffee* could make it into law and add them to the corpus of the Gadaa laws or reject it. Making its proclamations into the law of the nation is one of the measures of the successes of the governing party. It could wage a defensive local war as may be necessary. It could also make its development programs (usually social, environmental, and economic programs) clear to the public and proclaim the *finna* of the Gadaa.

By proclaiming the *finna*[8], the *Abbaa Gadaa* announces his aspiration for the nation or for the sub-national polity he is elected to lead for eight years. For example, he may pronounce, "*Gadaan Gabbina!*" meaning, 'This Gadaa is a period of augmentation.' The new *Abbaa Gadaa* mounts his new horse and receives a blessing. The ceremony at the shade of the outgoing *Abbaa Gadaa* concludes with extended prayers and blessings.

After the handover ceremonies, the new *Luba* is in full charge of the Gadaa government. The base of *hayyuu Raaba* now becomes the seat of the Gadaa government. The *Abbaa Gadaa* ties *ruufoo* on his head at all relevant times. It identifies him in public. He may also wear *Kallachaa* on his forehead. He upholds the protocol that identifies him when he journeys throughout the land for execution of his duties. Wherever he goes, he receives blessings and blesses others. The standard blessing is "*Oofkali!*" It means, "May you be successful!" It is both a wish and a prayer.

The transfer of power and the passage from one Gadaa-grade to the other is exclusive to the two power exchanging parties. Immediately after the moment of the transfer of the *bokkuu* and/or the *baallii*, the *Raaba* (*Doorii*) grade passes to the *Luba* grade and the outgoing *Luba* to *Yuba* I. There would be no passage between other grades at this time (see *'y'* in *Figure 1.6* and *'*'* in *Figure 3.7,* for example) because this particular transfer is taking place while the rest members of the two parties and that of the other three are in the middle of their respective Gadaa-grades. In other words, other transitions between Gadaa-grades had occurred four years ago. As mentioned above, this is because of the staggered succession.

The power transfer season is the time of excitement for both the incoming and outgoing parties and their respective Gadaa Councils. The outgoing Gadaa Council and the members of the party hand over the power with great excitement. The excitement comes from successfully governing

the polity for the last eight years. The incoming Gadaa Council and the members of the party also take power with great excitement for having their turn to lead the polity. The retiring *Luba* are always more excited than the incoming. The uncertainty of the future and the challenge of governing make the incoming Gadaa anxious.

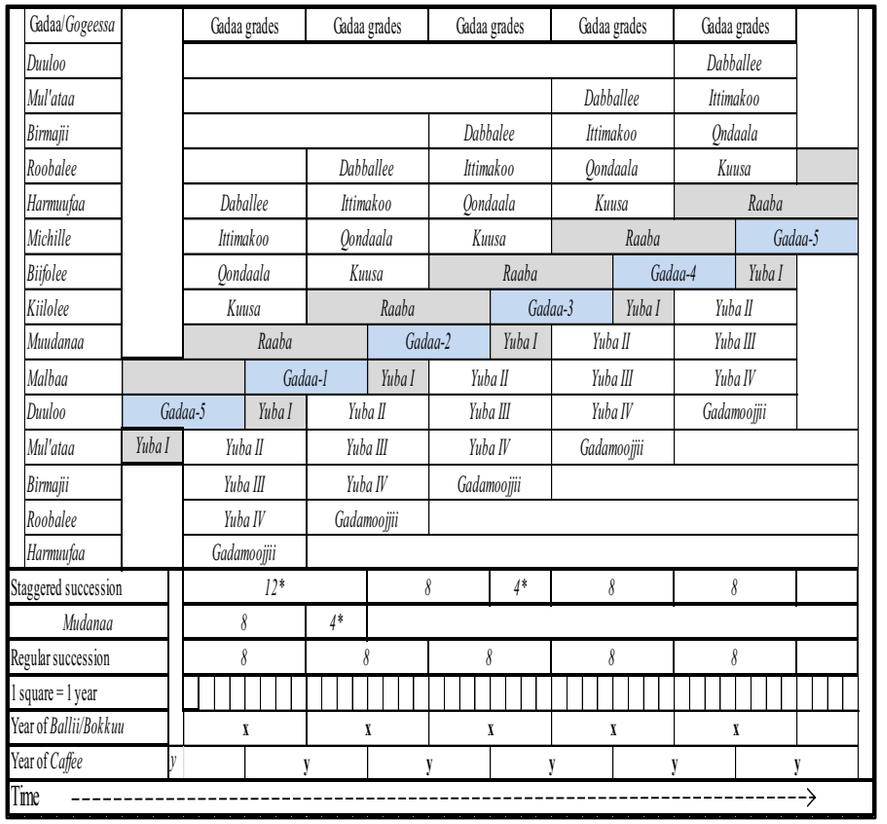


Figure 1.6. Staggered succession and alternating years of *Caffee* and *Baallii*

Notes to *Figure 1.6

1. This is a four-year staggered succession. Oromo polities have developed slightly different staggered succession system at the local government levels. The *Boorana* Oromo practice a five-year staggered succession. Among the *Karrayyuu*, the outgoing Gadaa

hands over half of its power to the incoming Gadaa after six years. The incoming Gadaa also does the same. The two years serve as experience sharing and as a period of preparation for smooth power transfer. The ceremony is known as *Goobsuu* or *gooba kennuu* (empowering or sharing a title). It takes place at the place called *Tarree Luugoo* with several weeks' long ceremonies and rituals that involve all the five parties and the *Qaalluus*. Full power transfer takes place at the end of the eighth year. A four-year staggered succession is the constituted practice. This could be observed from how the mid-term *Caffee* assembly coincides with transition rights of all other grades except Luba (the *Raaba* pass from regular *Raaba* to *Raaba Doorii*) and with other key events (see the discussion under No.13 to16 in this note and under section 2.2.12.).

2. The additional four years at *Raaba* grade is compensated by the four years reduction at the *Yuba* I grade.

3. Starting from the beginning of the additional four years to *Raaba* grade up to the middle of *Luba* grade, members beget "right born" *Dabballee*.

4. The additional four-year period at *Raaba* is, sometimes referred to as *Raaba Doorii, Raaba* Gadaa*, Dooroma,* or *Dhaloota*, while the next eight years is referred to as *Gadaa* or *Luba*. The first three emphasize the waiting years to take power, and *Dhaloota* emphasizes the fact that members are now ready to beget "right born" children.

5. *Raaba Doorii* or simply *Doorii* means senior *Raaba*. There is no formal Gadaa-grade with such a name or with its equivalent. It is a mechanism to distinguish between the two *Raaba*s*,* one of the preceding and one of the succeeding parties that exist at the same time for four years due to the staggered succession (see the overlap of the *Raaba* grades of these parties in *Figure 1*.6 and *Figure 3.7*). The *Raaba* of the preceding Gadaa, which includes the future three *Abbaa Gadaas*, is considered senior and that of the succeeding Gadaa is considered junior. Gadaa students and

researchers who have misunderstood or misread this overlap or overlooked that a four-year staggered succession is at work are not few.

6. *Gadaa* as age-set and *Gadaa* a Gadaa-grade are oftentimes confused. The name Gadaa is also used to designate the members of the Gadaa age-set. Ideal "right born" (see the discussion under section 1.4. below) become *Gameessa* (age-set) at the age of forty because of their age, before they have become Gadaa/*Luba* (Gadaa-grade) because of their grade. During the 40–44 years, they would be waiting to take over power to become Gadaa (governing body), according to the Gadaa-grade and the staggered succession. Oral communications seldom make a distinction between the two. It is, thus, clear why the confusion in both Gadaa literature and oral traditions and sometimes difficult to discern what exactly they refer to or represent.

7. In this work, *Luba* refers to the sixth grade of Gadaa and sometimes used interchangeably with Gadaa when the latter refers to the *Luba* in power.

8. Staggered succession affects only *Raaba* and *Yuba* I grades of the incoming and outgoing parties respectively. It lengthens the former grade and shortens the latter with the same four years. It also shifts the period of the *Luba/Gadaa* grade forward by four years. The regular every eight years succession and passage rites among all the other Gadaa-grades, however, remain unaffected.

9. The staggered succession of fathers does not affect the successions of their children. Their *Dabballee* children become *Ittimakoo* when they are in the middle of the staggered Gadaa stage. When the fathers become *Yuba I* for four years, their children stay in *Ittimakoo* grade: both transition to *Yuba II* and *Qondaala* respectively at the same time.

10. The staggered succession of *Raaba,* Gadaa*, and Yuba I* grades does not affect the regular succession of age-sets or other Gadaa-grades in any way.

11. *Caffee* assembly takes place in the middle of the Gadaa period. It is the time for the regular transition among the Gadaa-grades, except for the *Raaba* and *Luba*/Gadaa*,* in other words, the incoming and outgoing Gadaas (parties). The *Raaba* transition to nominal *Luba* (*Raaba Doorii*/*Raaba* Gadaa), the *Luba* in waiting.

12. According to the sitting protocol of the *Caffee* of *Ituu* and *Humbanaa* Oromo of Harargie, the *Raaba* and the *Doorii* sit to the left and the right of the chairperson, the *Abbaa Gadaa*, respectively (D' Salviac 2005 cited in Hassen, 2008).

13. The *Caffee* that evaluates the government of *Malbaa* (Gadaa 1) at its mid-term announces the three upcoming *Abbaa Gadaas* (Gadaa *sadeen*) of *Muudanaa* and the six *Hayyuu Aduulaa* of Gadaa *Biifolee* and names (initiates) the *Dabballee* of *Harmuufaa* to *Ittimakoo*. Similarly, the *Caffee* that would evaluate the government of *Muudanaa* (Gadaa-2) would announce the three upcoming *Abbaa Gadaas* of *Kiilolee,* the *Hayyuu Aduulaa* of *Michillee*, and names the *Dabballee* of *Roobalee*.

14. The naming ceremony (*Maq-baasa*) of the *Dabballee* grades takes place during the *Caffee* assemblies. The *Luba* fathers name their children, the *Dabballee*. The *Caffee* gives them a group name that could be become the name of their future Gadaa government. It is a transition rite from *Dabballee* to *Ittimakoo* (see Table 1.4). More importantly, it is a formal induction of the members to the Gadaa System.

15. The ritual of circumcision separates the first and the second halves of the *Luba* periods. About the *Maccaa* Oromo, D' Abbadie (2007 [1880],) states, "Four years after their entry into power, all members of the government are circumcised" (p. 126).

16. The power handover ceremonies, represented by 'x' (also by '#' in *Figure 3.7*), the preceding party hands over state power to the succeeding party with a grand ceremony. Both had prepared for the last four years to exchange the Gadaa state power. Several public, private, and membership group (*miseensa*) festivities had taken place for almost a year in a runner up to this final ceremony. The ceremony is full of extended rituals, prayers, and blessings, and includes ritual travels around the country. The insignia of state power (*baallii*/*bokkuu*) is exchanged at the very moment of the power transfer. The primary participants of the power transfer ceremony are members of the incoming and outgoing parties, but representatives and members of the other parties, as well as interested observers of other societies also take part in the ceremony.

1.3.6.2. *Caffee* and Mid-term Review

The governing *Luba* organizes the assembly of the representatives of all the members of the polity mid-way during its rule. This assembly is instituted by the Gadaa constitution. From tens of thousands up to hundreds of thousands of representatives could take part in the assembly. Representatives are nominated and evaluated both by kinship and by geographic socio-political structures of the polity before they are endorsed delegate or elected for the express purpose of legitimate representation. From every neighborhood to regions and from *Warra* to sub-moiety, every such entity that has existed sends its representative once every eight years to such assemblies.

The Oromo nation has a hierarchy of such assemblies. They may be classified as local, higher (Federations and Confederations), and supreme or pan-Oromo assembly. *Figure 3.1* illustrates the last two. The last has been less practical after the 16th century. Multiple Oromo communities have practiced the second form of the assembly until very recently. The *Maccaa* and the *Arsii*, for example, had higher assembly until recently despite having lower-level local assemblies. The representatives of the local assemblies took part in the higher assemblies and laws made at the higher assembly were binding to the local assemblies. In other words, they were member polities

to the higher assembly, the federation. Among the *Maccaa*, for example, despite establishing their respective *Caffees* known as *Ejersa Qobboo*, *Ejersa Jimma*, and *Birbirsa Booruu* respectively the *Gudurru*, the *Jimm*a, and the *Akaakoo* of the present Abbay Choman district of Horro-Guduru Zone of Oromia State had continued to attend the higher *Caffee* at *Odaa Bulluq* and had continued to receive laws made at the *Caffee* in the mid-19th century (Kenea, 2018).

Our emphasis is on the first, the local assembly of representatives. It has varied names across the Oromo communities. For example, among the *Boorana* Oromo of southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya, it is known as *Gumii;* among the *Arsii* Oromo it is known as *Manbadha;* among the *Maccaa* and *Tuulamaa*, it is known as *Caffee*. Legesse (2006) refers to this assembly as "assembly of assemblies" and "assembly of the multitudes" (p. 125). He named it so because it is a combination of at least five assemblies, after the five parties (*gogeessa*), which constitute an autonomous Oromo polity under the Gadaa Constitution. This writer has employed the appellation '*Caffee*' consistently in this work because of its currency as the official name of the people's representative (parliament) of the government of Oromia State. '*Caffee* Oromia' has been the name of the parliament of the Oromia National Regional State of Ethiopia since the early 1990s.

The governing *Gadaa* may organize its assemblies before it could organize the *Caffee*. As the mid-way of its rule approaches, the governing party (Gadaa) would hold its own general Assembly, Gadaa General Assembly. It is the Assembly of the members of the party. In preparation for its General Assembly, the Gadaa Council organizes an internal assembly of the *Luba* of the governing party. If *Gadaa Malbaa* were in power, for example, in principle, all its *Luba* would attend this assembly. The *Luba* Council prepares the agenda for the Gadaa General Assembly and may make important decisions of its own, including the recommendation for introduction or replacement of laws, rules, or policies. The Council, then calls for the General Assembly of the Gadaa. The Assembly, where all eligible members of the party or their representative attend, deliberates on the recommendations of the Council. The Assembly may also produce new recommendations. All recommendations, be it new law or an amendment, new rule, or new policies or changes to thereof, would be prepared in the customary format for the deliberation of the *Caffee*.

Unlike the General Assembly of the party that may take place at the convenience of the members of the party and as many times as may be necessary, the *Caffee* takes place at the designated time, only once in eight years. It takes place at mid-way of the eight-year term of the Gadaa government, as per the staggered succession. Members of all the five parties that constitute the polity are expected to take part in this assembly, directly in person or through representatives. In other words, all able members of the polity, not only members of the governing party of the polity, take part in this Assembly. Every Oromo household is represented directly or indirectly in it.

The *Caffee* is the highest authority of the polity. It is the source of all the powers of the Gadaa government and all the laws of the land. The *Caffee* convenes every eight years at the chosen place, historically marked with a giant *Odaa* tree. It stays in session for as long as necessary. It could be for weeks or months. The *Caffee* assembly is remarkably busy. During its sessions (see 'y' in *Figure 1.6*, and *'*'* in *Figure 3.7*) the representatives of the members of the polity make landmark decisions and perform rituals. At this highly disciplined and meticulously planned Assembly:

1. the natural laws (*safuu*) are upheld
2. the Gadara constitution is re-proclaimed
3. the laws are accounted, amended, and proclaimed
4. new laws are made and proclaimed
5. important decisions and judgments are made
6. the governing *Abbaa Gadaa* and his government are evaluated, and necessary decisions are made
7. the results of two simultaneous elections (that of *Hayyuu Aduulaa* at the end of *Qondaala* grade and that of the future three Gadaas (Gadaa *sadeen*) at the beginning of the third class of *Raaba* (*Raaba Doorii*)) are proclaimed
8. the *Dabballee*, children of the *Luba*, are named and initiated to the Gadaa of their fathers as *Ittimakoo*, and
9. rituals, prayers, and blessings take place according to the laws.

1.3.7. Grades VII–X: *Yuba* I – *Yuba* IV

Yuba I is the shortest grade. Because the members had stayed at the *Raaba* grade for twelve years as *hayyuu Raaba* (eight years regular and four

years apprentice) because of staggered succession, the actual years that the retired *Luba* would spend at this grade is reduced by half. This would compensate overstay at *Raaba* grade and bring the system back to synchronous eight years. They would stay for eight years each at the other three semi retirements (*Yuba* II-IV) grades.

Yuba I is the first semi-retirement grade from the political office. After power hand over, the *Luba* become *Yuba*. They are no more the governing group. They, however, remain leaders of their own party. They would remain so until a new generation of leaders will be elected. Also, they could be elected as function-specific councilors to the successive Gadaa governments and its institutions.

Yuba II is the second semi-retired grade. In general, they are the father of the *Qondaala*. They are highly vested in the election campaigns of the *Qondaala*. Father and son belong to the same party (*gogeessa*) but to different Gadaa genealogical generations (*luba*), Gadaa of the generation of fathers, and Gadaa of the generation of sons, that are forty years apart (see *Figure 1.11.* and *Figure 1.12.*). They oversee the election campaigns and the election itself as observers. Their main interest is making sure that a competent candidate who could keep the legacy of the party is nominated and elected. *Yuba II* fathers who have a candidate *Qondaala* campaign for him when they have full confidence that he would make a good leader. If a *Yuba II* father has hesitation on the office worthiness of his *Qondaala* son, he would not campaign for him simply because he is his son: the success of the party and common good always comes first in Gadaa elections.

The *Yuba* grades, in general, are semi-retired grades. They have the role of oversight of the election of *hayyuu Aduulaa* and the executive functions of the Gadaa government. Some members serve as advisors to the governing Gadaa Council, others become experts of the constitution, the laws, and the customs. When the Gadaa government that they advise or oversight retires, they too retire so.

It is however common that erudite Gadaa experts stay in their advisory or expert position for more than one Gadaa. The *hayyuu, ayyaantuu,* and experts of *argaa-dhageettii*, for example, might serve multiple Gadaa governments. In addition, those who retire so early because they were "late born" (children of the *Yuba*) – where they are allowed to become *Luba* at an early age in the Gadaa of the generation of sons without passing through all the Gadaa grades (by "skipping" the early grades) – might continue to serve

in conjunction with the governing Gadaa Council and its shadow (*Meddhicha* Council) by becoming *hayyuu Garbaa*. *Yaa'a Garbaa* is constituted by elected *hayyuu Garbaa*. The *hayyuu Garbaa* are elected from the four non-governing parties, usually four from each. The former *Abbaa Gadaas* or their executives of recently retired parties and the "late born" (*ilmaan Jaarsaa*) of the early retired parties have better chances to be elected. Because these parties are retired parties, the *hayyuu Garbaa* are very experienced. Because of this, they exert considerable influence on the governing Gadaa and its *hayyuu Aduulaa*.

Nevertheless, skipping Gadaa grades is neither lawful nor customary practice. The practice appears to be limited to some *Maccaa* and *Tuulamaa* Oromo where they allow the "late born" to join the Gadaa of the generation of sons by "skipping" the *Dabballee* and *Ittimakoo*, even the *Qondaala* and *Kuusa* grades. This could happen only when multiple Gadaa laws, including the law of *rakoo*, are violated. In such case, if a son was born to a father at the beginning of *Yuba III* grade in a four-year staggered succession, he would become *Luba* twenty years later at the age of twenty instead of waiting for the next *Dabballee* grade of the Gadaa of the generation of fathers and becoming *Luba* at the age of sixty-four. This would be an anomaly in the system. Gadaa System would otherwise require members of the party to be initiated at the naming ceremony, marry the first wife at the transition from *Kuusa* to *Raaba*, and beget children only after fatherhood ceremony on becoming *Raaba Doorii*, all being requirements to become Luba, and hence *Abbaa Gadaa*.

There are some executive offices of the Gadaa government that are occupied almost exclusively by senior *Yuba* grades. The office of *Bokkuu* among the *Boorana* and *Fagii* among the *Gujii*, for example, are occupied by elected members of the *Yuba IV*. The most respected member of *Yuba III* occupies the office of *Abbaa Seeraa*. Members of *Yuba III* grade, in general, are regularly active during the legislation process at *Caffee* assemblies and on review of the Gadaa laws. Besides, in most cases, the senior councilors of the Gadaa government, *hayyuu*, are elected from the *Yuba III* grade.

Members of *Yuba III* and *Yuba IV* also have added responsibilities in their parties. Within the party, when the father becomes *Yuba III*, the son becomes *Kuusa*; when the father becomes *Yuba* II, the son becomes *Qondaala*. By transitioning from *Qondaala* to *Kuusa*, the sons assume leadership of the *miseensa*. Until they would become *Luba* and become leaders of every member of the polity, they still are leaders of their party only. The fathers in *Yuba III* and *Yuba IV* grades are responsible to prepare the sons for success

in leading the whole community, all the members of the five parties, by the time they would become *Luba*. After reaching *Yuba* IV, all *Yuba* retire to the sacred *Gadamoojjii* grade.

1.3.8. Grade XI: *Gadamoojjii*

Gadamoojjii is a sacred, apolitical, and full retirement age. Members cease all political involvement. They try to lead a sacred life. They are the third living generation. In the case of "right" birth, they are fathers of those in the *Yuba I* grade, retired *Luba*, and grandfather of the *Dabballee* grade of the Gadaa. They are also great grandfathers of the infants *Dabballee*. They could also be father and grandfather of the "late born" and "early born" who belong to other Gadaa-grades, respectively. Socially and ritually, the Oromo treat *Dabballee* and *Gadamoojjii* alike. Some Oromo communities, the *Gujii,* for example, call the latter *Jaarsa Guduruu*. *Guduruu* hairstyle connects the *Dabballee* and the *Gadamoojjii* underlining the fact that both grades are liminal, and the Oromo people consider them as the "same" for care and protection. Both belong to the liminal age where the very person of them is considered sacred.

The main role of the *Gadamoojjii* in the society and in the Gadaa government would be peacemaking, mediating reconciliation, and leading ritual prayers. They are highly respected in society. They are distinguished in public: they always wear *kallachaa* on their forehead and hold *horooroo* in their hands. This distinction and the respect they have according to the Gadaa System and the *aadaa* (culture and customs) of the Oromo earns them many successes in their role in the community. They hardly fail in restoring peace by mediating conflicts or in settling disputes by reconciling opponents.

The *Gadamoojjii* retire from all activities of the Gadaa System at the end of the grade (see Table 1.4). The exit rite from *Gadamoojjii* is known as *Qumbii*. It is a ceremony where the outgoing *Gadamoojjii* hand over incense called *qumbii* to the incoming *Gadamoojjii*, but not before the life of the *Gadamoojjii* is audited publicly. The public audit is the last ceremony in the life of an Oromo in the Gadaa System. It is a ritual recount of the life of the *Gadamoojjii*. It takes place in a public gathering organized by the community for the purpose around the time of the *Caffee* assembly in a four-year staggered succession. The *Gadamoojjii* candidly recounts their deeds, both good and bad, and heroic and cowardly with utmost honesty. The public

also does the same. In the end, the attendees would reach consensus as to what legacy the *Gadamoojjii* had left behind from his long active life in the Gadaa System.

Because Gadaa System assumes a man could live up to 120 years, *Gadamoojjii* grade may also be subdivided by ordinal numbers, just like *Yuba,* to account for centenaries. Accordingly, if a *Gadamoojjii* were blessed to live beyond one Gadaa period, eight years, he could be identified as *Gadamoojjii* I, *Gadamoojjii* II, etc. for the consecutive Gadaa periods (*jaarraa*) he might be very blessed to live. The distinction, however, may be important only for ritual purposes. It may be possible that some members, who would become *Gadamoojjii* at relatively younger ages because they were born towards the last years of the *dhaloota* period or they were early *Ittimakoo*, could live longer than one *jaarraa* after reaching *Gadamoojjii* grade. However, because they are fully retired from Gadaa System and they are rare, it appears that no attention has been given to formally sub-divide the *Gadamoojjii* grades, compared to the *Yuba* grades.

The corresponding age-set to *Gadamoojjii* is *Jaarsa*. It is common to observe Gadaa scholars mistakenly indicating *Gadamoojjii* as an age-set. It is not about age but Gadaa-grades. Similarly, those who have included *Gadamoojjii* as an age-set have extended the number of age-sets by one to twelve. However, a formal number of both age-sets and Gadaa-grades are eleven. Even though *Gadamoojjii* could be subdivided like *Yuba*, every Oromo above the age of eighty belongs to one single category, *Jaarsa*. After reaching eighty years, age has no significance for the socio-political and ritual roles of *Jaarsa*, which include reconciliation, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution, leading prayers, and educating the young.

1.4. "Right Born," "Early Born," "Late Born"

As discussed above, Gadaa System proscribes begetting sons during the eight years between *Daannisa* and *Maq-baasaa*. It has strict rules as to when children should be born to an Oromo father. These rules have been relaxed recently. In some parts of Oromia, members who are in the senior *Raaba* (*Raaba Doorii*) and the first half of *Luba* grade are referred to as *dhaloota*, those who beget children, to signify that they are at the right grade to have children born *Dabballee*. Begetting children during the years of *Dhaloota* ensures

synchronization of the age-set with the Gadaa-grades so that the children would attain the right grade at the right age, so-known as "right born."

Unsynchronized birth would challenge the social structure and power balances. If children were born too early or too late, they would miss some age-based rights and would delay some responsibilities that are enshrined in the Gadaa constitution and the laws. Besides, it would affect negatively the demographics, the power balances among and within the established five Gadaa parties, and the vertical distribution of power between the genealogical generation of the sons and the fathers (see the discussion under section 3.8.4.).

In the Gadaa System, there are two possibilities of cacophonous births: early birth (*ilmaan kormaa*) and late birth (*ilmaan jaarsaa*). Some anthropologists who have studied Gadaa System, including Asmarom Legesse, refer to them as "early born" and "late-born." Both are relative to the "right birth" as proscribed by the Gadaa System, also referred to as "right born" (*ilmaan dhalootaa* or *Bar-baraa*). The illustration in *Figure 1.7.* suffices better understanding.

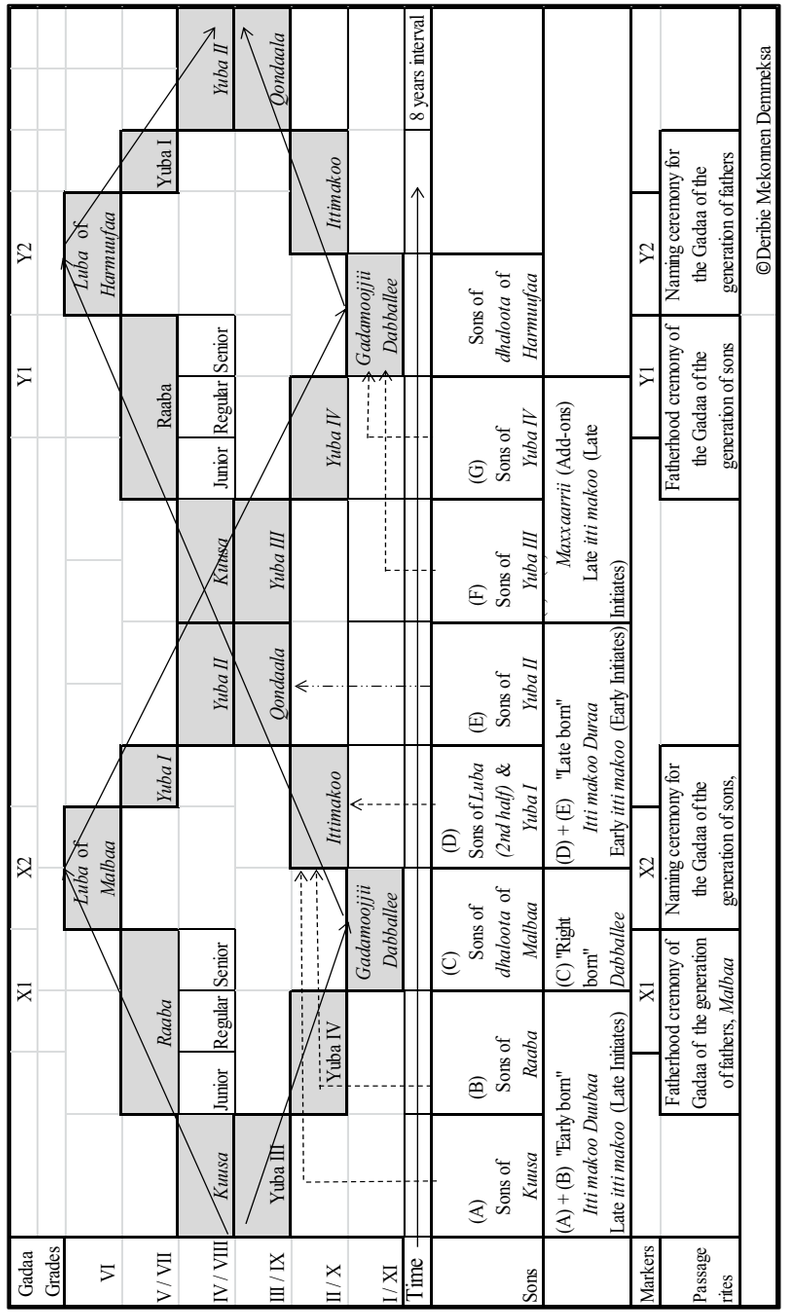


Figure 1.7. "Early-born," "right-born" and "late-born" in a four-year staggered succession

Notes to *Figure 1.7.*

- (A): In principle, no child could be born to *Kuusa* because the *Kuusa* are not yet married. They marry when they transition to *Raaba*. Nonetheless, they can have children because they are above twenty-four years old. Historically, as mentioned above, the *Kuusa* abandoned such children or gave them for adoption. In modern times, they are raised as "early born."

- (B): The *Raaba* are married. However, Gadaa laws prohibit giving birth before the fatherhood ceremony. Nonetheless, couples may beget children. Such children would be raised as "early born." All "early born" children do not have the ritual privileges of the *Dabballee*. They would be initiated to the Gadaa polity in the Gadaa generation of the sons at the initiation grade, *Ittimakoo*.

- (C): This is the right period to beget children. It is known as *dhaloota*. It is two periods: *Doorii* and the first half of *Luba*. During the eight years, the couples try to beget as many children as possible. Only children born during this period are rightful *Dabballee*.

- (D): During the second half of *Luba*, parents who have not begotten a son try to have one. Others may continue to have more. In addition, children may be born to *Yuba* I and his *rakoo* wife, who would be at least 44-48 years old. A *rakoo* wife could be eight years younger than her husband is. The minimum marriage age for Oromo girls is twenty-four.

- (E): During *Yuba* II, it is highly unlikely for *rakoo* wife to give birth because of menopause. Alternatively, the couple may adopt a son in case they have not had one of theirs. Adopted sons have the same legal, social, and cultural rights. Practically, however, it makes no sense to do so because the initiation period of the Gadaa of the generation of sons has passed and the son would not be of age to marry to become *Luba* of *Harmuufaa*. Such sons

would become *Luba* only among the Oromo who have relaxed the strict requirement of being a married man to become *Luba* by allowing early marriage ritual only where the couple commit to each other but would marry latter when they come of age.

- (F): It is improbable for a *Yuba* III to beget children from his *rakoo* wife [52-64 years] unless he had married another wife. Historically the Oromo had been monogamous: only widowers could marry a second wife. Historically, widows used to be inherited by the eldest brother of her deceased husband. The divorce had been a cultural taboo. Traditionally, *rakoo* widows and widowers used to wait for seven years before they marry again. Since about a century ago, following the adoption of Islam by many and the imposition of Abyssinian culture, having more than one wife and marry as early as a year after the death of a *rakoo* partner have become part of the Oromo culture in some regions. It has become common particularly when the man has resources and the woman is in childbearing ages. Thus, *Yuba* III may marry a young wife and have "late born" children or the old *rakoo* couple may adopt a son who would become "late born" in the Gadaa System.

- (G): It is almost impossible for the *Yuba* IV to have children from any wife because of biological factors. The only possibility to have a son at this grade is through adoption.

- (A) + (B): These are "early born" sons to the Gadaa of the generation of sons. They would join their Gadaa generation, *Harmuufaa*, at an advanced age as senior *Ittimakoo* (as indicated by the two arrows) and become rightful *Luba* of *Harmuufaa*.

- (C): These are "right born" to the generation of sons, *Harmuufaa*. They would pass through the Gadaa grades while within the subscribed age rages and become rightful *Luba* in *Harmuufaa*.

- (D) + (E): These are "late born" sons to the Gadaa of the generation of sons. They would join their Gadaa generation,

Harmuufaa, at an early age as junior *Ittimakoo* and become rightful *Luba* in *Harmuufaa*. They are known commonly as *ilmaan jaarsaa*. They would not be elected to office because of their youthful age. They would retire (become *Yuba*) at an early age.

- (F) + (G): These are "late born" sons to the Gadaa of the generation of sons, *Harmuufaa*. They have two options: one, wait until a very late age for the Gadaa of the generation of sons and become rightful *Luba;* two, join the Gadaa of the generation of fathers, *Malbaa*, as *maxxaarrii* (add-ons), at an advanced age (as indicated with the two arrows), and become auxiliary *Luba* in *Malbaa*. In the first option, they would become rightful *Luba* at incredibly old age, usually in their ninety's. In the second option, they become a nominal *Luba* with no rights to be elected *Abbaa Gadaa*.

1.4.1. "Right Born"

"Right born" are those children born between fatherhood (*Daannisa*) and naming (*Maq-baasa*) ceremonies. This period includes four years of Senior *Raaba* (*Raaba Doorii*) and the first four years of *Luba* in a four-year stagger staggered succession. This period is known as *dhaloota* among *Maccaa* and *Tuulamaa* Oromo in reference to the fact that members are in the right period to beget sons who would be aligned with Gadaa grades and age-sets (see *Figure 1.7*).

Ideal "right born" children are born in the first year at once after the fatherhood ceremony. They would not only be both *Dabballee* and *Daa'ima* for eight years but all their Gadaa grades and age-sets would be aligned throughout their life. They are the cause of the erroneous assumption by many that age-sets and Gadaa-grades are the same and have the same name. Only a few "right born" are ideal "right born." A father can have only one ideal "right born" son.

Let us illustrate a "right born" with an example. Let us say, a man belongs to the party of *Malbaa*. He is 41 years old now. He just turned *Luba* in a four-year staggered succession. His first son would be born after a year. His son would be born *Dabballee* because his father is in the first half of *Luba*

grade. The young boy would remain in the *Dabballee* grade for four years and becomes *Ittimakoo* after the naming ceremony in the middle of the Gadaa government (*Luba*) of his father. However, he would be at *Daa'ima* age-set (0–8 years) four years after he had attained the second Gadaa grade, *Ittimakoo.* Thirty-nine years later, he would become *Luba* of Gadaa *Harmuufaa,* Gadaa of the generation of sons. He would become *Luba* not according to his age but exactly forty years after his father had become *Luba.* However, he would have to wait for one year to join the *Gameessa* age–set, 40–48 years. For more examples of "right born," see "sons of *Dhalootaa*" in *Figure 1.7* and children 'a,' 'b', and 'c' in *Figure 1.8:* 'a' is an ideal "right born."

There are rights and privileges associated with being born *Dabballee* and begetting *Dabballee*. All children are born *Daa'ima*, but not all children are born *Dabballee*. All children who are born *Dabballee* are "right born." To be born *Dabballee*, their father must be *Dhaloota* (between fatherhood and naming ceremonies). Children who are not born *Dabballee* can become nominal *Dabballee* (without the privileges) by waiting for the *Dabballee* grade of the Gadaa of their own generation or that of the generation of their fathers or their sons. Such children would be "early born" or "late born" respectively. They could be born early and become nominal *Dabballee* and the outside of the rightful age at an advanced age. If they are born late also, they could become nominal *Dabballee* at an advanced age (or possibly at the right age if born to a *Gadamoojjii* from the Gadaa of the generation of fathers) as *maxxaarrii* (see *Figure 1.7* and *Notes to Figure 1.8*, part II: *Key to Illustration Birth* and 1.3.2. above). However, those who become nominal *Dabballee* do not enjoy the political rights and the social and cultural privileges that those who are born *Dabballee* do enjoy. Similarly, the parents of those who become nominal *Dabballee*, do not enjoy the cultural and social privileges as do the parents of the rightful *Dabballee*. The privileges are one of the motivating factors for parents to beget *Dabballee*, begetting "right born" children.

1.4.2. "Early Born"

Considering the *Luba* grade as middle grade, the "early born" are those children born when their fathers were at the early grades of their Gadaa. For example, if a child is born to an ideal "right born" Oromo member of *Malbaa* who is just twenty-seven years old, he would be seventeen years old by the time his father would become *Luba* in a four-year staggered succession. He

would join the *Dabballee* grade of the Gadaa of the Generation of sons, *Harmuufaa*, at age of thirteen (*Ijoollee* age-set, 8–16 years), i.e., thirteen years older than the ideal age to be born *Dabballee*. He would belong to an age-set of 16–24 years (*Qeerroo*). In a four-year staggered succession, he would become *Luba* of Gadaa *Harmuufaa* forty-four years after his father, at the age of sixty-one. Such "early born" sons who join the early grades of the Gadaa of their generation are known as *ilmaan kormaa* (sons of the youth). Under strict Gadaa rules, such as "early born" sons would only be hypothetical: the Oromo do not marry before the age of thirty-two years. "Son of *Kuusa"* and "Sons of *Raaba"* in *Figure 1.7* are "early born." However, son 'x' in *Figure 1.8* is a reasonable example of "early born."

1.4.3. "Late Born"

"Late born" are those children who are born to elderly "right born" fathers. The later they are born, the earlier they would join the Gadaa grades of the Gadaa of the generation of their fathers (not their own) as nominal *Dabballee*. Because they do not belong to the Gadaa generation they join, they become add-ons (*maxxaarrii*) with junior status. "Late born" are sons of the members of the *Yuba* grades and those who belong to the second half of *Luba* and *Gadamoojjii* grade (see *Figure 1.7*). For example, if an ideal "right born" father begets a son at the age of sixty; his son would become nominal *Dabballee* of the Gadaa of the generation of fathers at the age of twenty. He would be initiated as late *Ittimakoo* at the age of twenty-eight. He would become *Luba* at the age of 64 in a four-year staggered succession. He cannot become *Luba* early by skipping the earlier Gadaa-grades of the Gadaa of the generation of sons, Gadaa of his own generation. He would, however, belong to the *Daa'ima* age-set (0–8 years) at birth but no to *Dabballee* grade. By the time he would become nominal *Dabballee,* he would belong to the *Qeerroo* age-set (16 – 24 years old). Such "late born" children are known as *ilmaan jaarsaa* (sons of the old). Child 'y,' 'z,' and *'e'* in *Figure 1.8* are other examples of "late born" children. Late adopted sons also become "late-born."

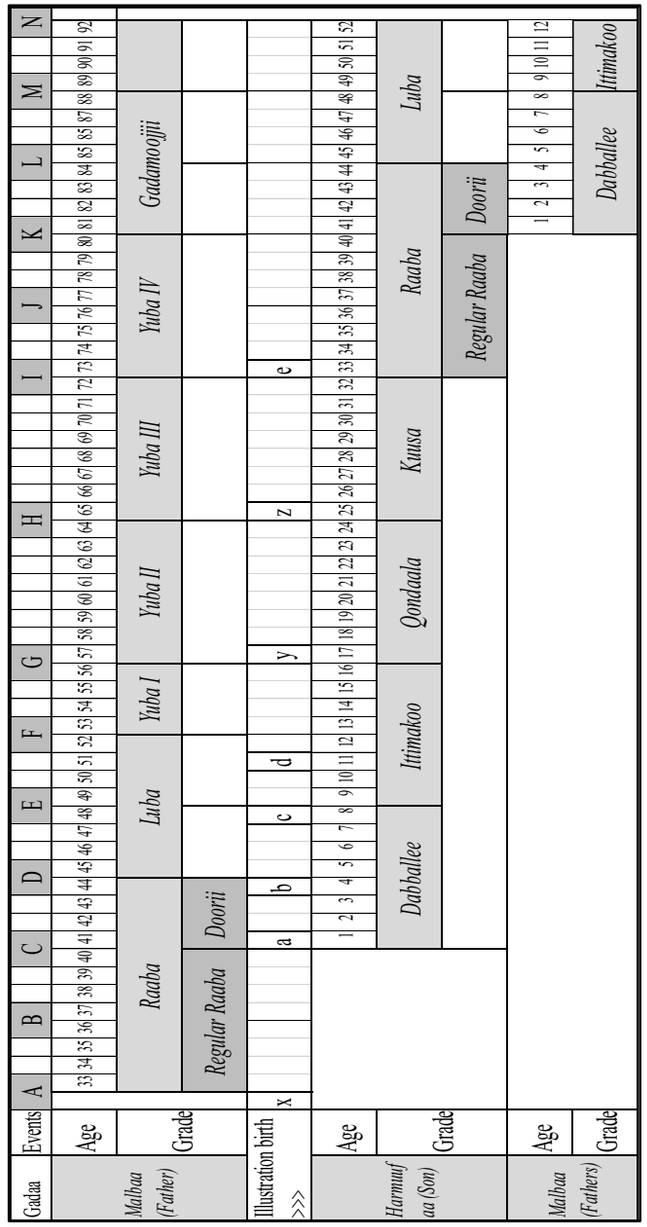


Figure 1.8. Illustration of the right period of birth and Gadaa Grades in genealogical three generations

Notes to *Figure* 1.8.

I. Key to 'Events'

1. 'A'– The father, a member of party of *Malbaa*, gets married at the age of 32. Let us assume he is an ideal "right born" like his son, and like his grandson in this illustration of transitions among three-generation.
2. 'B'– The father becomes the regular *Raaba* because the *Raaba* of the preceding party becomes *Luba*.
3. 'C'– The father performs *Daannisa*, fatherhood ceremony. He becomes *Doorii*. He becomes *Dhaloota*. He starts to beget children. The sons become *Dabballee* of *Harmuufaa,*
4. 'D'– The party of the father takes over state power at the *Baallii* ceremony. It becomes the governing party. The father becomes *Luba*. If he had been elected *hayyuu Aduulaa*, he could be elected *Abbaa Gadaa*. He could also be elected to other Gadaa offices.
5. 'E'– *Caffee* assembly takes place. It conducts a mid-term evaluation of the Malbaa government. The father gets his sons named at the naming ceremony, *Maq-baasa*. His son's transition from *Dabballee* to *Ittimakoo* of *Harmuufaa*.
6. 'F'– The party of the father (*Malbaa*) hands over the power. The father becomes *Yuba* I. The sons are in the middle of the *Ittimakoo* grade of *Harmuufaa*.
7. 'G'– The father transitions from *Yuba I* to *Yuba II* grade of *Malbaa*. The son becomes *Qondaala* of *Harmuufaa*.
8. 'H'– The father transitions from *Yuba II* to *Yuba III* grade of *Malbaa*. The son transitions from *Qondaala* to *Kuusaa* grade of *Harmuufaa*. *Harmuufaa* elects its *Hayyuu Aduulaa*. The son could be elected *Hayyuu Aduulaa* of *Harmuufaa*.
9. 'I'– The son gets married at the age of 32. He becomes *Raaba* of *Harmuufaa*. The father transitions from *Yuba II* to *Yuba IV* of *Malbaa*.
10. 'J'– The son becomes r*egular Raaba* of *Harmuufaa*. The father continues the *Yuba IV* grade of *Malbaa*.
11. 'K'– The son performs *Daannisa*, fatherhood ceremony. He becomes *Doorii*: he becomes *Dhaloota*. The father

(now a grandfather) begins full retirement from Gadaa (*Malbaa*); he becomes *Gadamoojjii*. The son starts to beget sons (now grandsons). The grandsons become *Dabballee* of *Malbaa*. They would be named when the *Gadamoojjii* fully retires, i.e., the *Maq-baasa* and *Qumbii* ceremonies are performed at the same time. One hemicycle of the party, from 'C' to 'M,' is complete.

12. 'K'–The party of the son (now a father) takes over the power: It becomes the Gadaa government. The son becomes *Luba*. If he had been elected *Hayyuu Aduulaa* at 'H', he could be elected *Abbaa Gadaa* of *Harmuufaa*. He could be elected to other Gadaa offices. The father continues in the *Gadamoojjii* grade of *Malbaa*. The grandson continues in the *Dabballee* grade of *Malbaa*.
13. 'M'– *Caffee* assembly takes place. It conducts a mid-term evaluation of the *Harmuufaa* government. The grandsons are named at the naming ceremony. They transition from *Dabballee* to *Ittimakoo* of *Malbaa*. The son is in the middle of the *Luba* grade of *Harmuufaa*. The father (a grandfather) fully retires from the *Gadamoojjii* grade of *Malbaa*.
14. 'N'–The party of the son's hands over power. The son becomes *Yuba* I. The grandsons are in the middle of the *Ittimakoo* grade of *Malbaa*.

Note that children could be born to a father at any of the years between 'C' and 'E,' and 'K' and 'M.' Nonetheless, they all transition from one grade to the next at the same time as one body. All of them perform, for example, marriage and *Daannisa* ceremonies together despite having an age difference of up to seven years. Children who are born at the latter stage within the eight years would marry and become *Luba* at a younger age. If one were born in the first and the other in the last year of *Dabballee*, for example, they would be forty-four and thirty-six years old respectively when they would become *Luba*. Nonetheless, both would become *Luba* exactly forty years after their father had become *Luba*.

The following keys to the illustration birth explore other possibilities of birth in comparison to the right birth during *Dhalootaa*, from *Daannisa* to *Maq-baasa*, mid-term of *Luba*, i.e., from 'C' to 'E'.

II. Key to Illustration births

1. [**x**] is "early born." He is an *ilma kormaa*. He would be one-age-set older than the "right born" at all Gadaa-grades. He would become *Dabballee* of *Harmuufaa*, at the age of eight. Because he would pass through Dabballee and *Ittimakoo* grades, he could be elected as *hayyuu Aduulaa* at 'H'. He would be 52 years of age by the time he would become *Luba*, or *Abbaa Gadaa* if elected. However, the election of *Abbaa Gadaa* favors the "right born."
2. [**a**], [**b**], and [**c**] are "right born." They are born *Dabballee*. All would become *Luba* of *Harmuufaa* at the same time at the age of 44, 40, and 36 respectively at 'L'. [**c**] would be *Dabballee* only for few months. Because all would pass through all the initiations from *Dabballee* to *Luba*, they, of course only one of them, could be elected *Abbaa Gadaa*.
3. [**d**] is born when his father is *Luba*. Nevertheless, he is "late-born." This is because he is not born *Dabballee*. By the time of his birth, the *Dabballee* of the Gadaa of his generation had already been named and had passed to the *Ittimakoo* grade. He cannot catch up with them unless the polity had made allowance that he could join as early *Ittimakoo* (see the discussion under section 1.3.2.). Otherwise, he would have to wait for 29 years to become *maxxaarrii* (add-on) in *Malbaa* and become nominal *Dabballee* at 'K'. He would be late *Ittimakoo* (late initiate) in the Gadaa of the generation of fathers at 'H'. He would not be elected *Abbaa Gadaa* but he would be *Luba* at the age of 73. The *maxxaarrii* always have junior political status and parallel initiation in the Gadaa that included them.
4. [**y**] is "late-born." He is *ilma Jaarsaa*. His peers would be at the end of *Qondaala* grade at 'H.' He cannot catch up with them, i.e., the grades of the Gadaa of his generation

unless the polity had made allowances in the laws that he could still join his peers but with no possibility to be elected *Abbaa Gadaa*. Otherwise, he would become a *maxxaarrii* (add-on) in the party of the generation of his father (that of the grandson's in the illustration). He would have to wait for the next round of *Dabballee* grade of the Gadaa of the generation of his fathers, *Malbaa to become a nominal Dabballee* at the age of 24 in *Malbaa* at 'K'. He would be late *Ittimakoo* at 'M.' He would be 68 years old by the time he would become *Luba* in *Malbaa* but he would not be elected to office.

5. [**z**] is "late-born." He is the son of an old man. He would become nominal *Dabballee* at 'K' in the party of the generation of his father (*Malbaa*) at the age of 16, and *Luba* at the age of 60. Like [**y**], he would be a *maxxaarrii* in the party of the generation of his father. He would be late *Ittimakoo* at 'M.' He would not be elected *Abbaa Gadaa*.
6. [**e**] is very "late-born." He is the birth or adopted son of an old man. He would become nominal *Dabballee* at 'K' in the party of the generation of his father at the age of eight, just like [**x**]. However, the two belong to different Gadaa generations: [**x**] belongs to the generation of sons and hence to *Harmuufaa*; [**e**] belongs to the generation of the fathers (grandchildren) and hence to *Malbaa*. [**e**] is an add-on to *Malbaa* from the generation of Gadaa of the sons, *Harmuufaa*. Thus, only [**x**] could be elected *Abbaa Gadaa* of *Harmuufaa*. Alternately, [e] could wait for the Gadaa of the generation of sons, become nominal *Dabballee* at the age of forty-eight, late initiate (late *Ittimakoo*) at the age of fifty-six, and rightful *Luba* at the age of ninety-six, in a four-year staggered succession.
7. [**x**] and anyone born between [**x**] and [**a**] are referred to as *ilmaan kormaa* ('sons of the "bull"'). Practically, no child could be boron to an ideal "right born" father before he had attained the age of thirty-two. He could not marry before that age. Traditionally, even the children born to an Oromo before he had celebrated the fatherhood

ceremony, i.e., during the eight years between marriage and fatherhood, would not be elected *Abbaa Gadaa*. Presently, most Oromo polities allow the early-born to join the Gadaa as late initiates, late *Ittimakoo,* but with no privileges of a "right born" *Dabballee*.

8. [**a**], [**b**], and [**c**] are sometimes referred to as *bar-baraa* ('those who "knew" their years') or *ilmaan dhalootaa* ('children of those who beget children'). All of them have equal prospects of becoming *Abbaa Gadaa* of *Harmuufaa*. The first-born son (*hangafa*) has the prerogative to compete for the office of *Abbaa Gadaa*. However, any of his younger brothers could be elected if they have better competence and character that the office requires.
9. [**y**], [**z**], and [**e**] are "late-born." They are referred to as *ilmaan jaarsaa* ('sons of the elderly'). They would be *maxxaarrii* to the Gadaa of the generation of fathers as mentioned above. They could become *Luba* passing through all the initiations but mostly at older ages. Their initiation ceremonies are held separate from those of [**x**], [**a**], [**b**], and [**c**] of the Gadaa of the generation of sons. None of them could be elected *Abbaa Gadaa* of *Harmuufaa*.
10. [**x**], [**d**], [**y**], [**z**], and [**e**] must wait at least for the period of one Gadaa Grade before they would catch up with the *Dabballee* grade of Gadaa of the generation of sons (their generation, their *Luba*) or the Gadaa of the generation of fathers (their father's *Luba*). Some writers have considered mistakenly those waiting periods as *Ittimakoo* grade and presented *Ittimakoo* grade as if it precedes the *Dabballee* Grade (see the discussion under section 1.3.2.). The same mistake is clear, particularly among the *Tuulamaa*.
11. [**y**], [**z**] and [**e**] would be exceptional children. It is very unlikely that they could be born from the *rakoo* wife who must have been at least 24 years old when the father had married her at about the age of 32 at the beginning of *Raaba* grade. When the father becomes about 57, 65, and 75 years old, she would become at least 49, 57, 65 years

old, respectively. Biologically, it would be impossible for her to beget [***y***], [**z**] and [**e**] (see Notes to *Figure 1*.7). They could be born if the father marries another younger wife, being a widower or due to infertility on the part of the *rakoo* wife and with her blessing. A *rakoo* wife is a wife for life in its true sense.

12. Based on the time of the birth of children to "right born" fathers, following general observations about the relationship between age-sets and Gadaa-grades, could be made: For the "early born" (*ilmaan kormaa*), age-sets are advanced than regular Gadaa-grades. For the "right born" (*ilmaan dhalootaa*), age-sets are the same as Gadaa grades except for the fifth, sixth, and seventh Gadaa-grades because of staggered succession to power. For the "late born" (*ilmaan jaarsaa*), there are two options: in the Gadaa of their own generation, Gadaa grades are advanced than the age-set. In the Gadaa of the generation of their sons (that of the Gadaa of the generation of fathers), where they become *maxxaarrii* (add-on), age-sets are advanced than Gadaa-grades.

1.5. Gadaa Cycles

Scholars describe the Gadaa System as a cyclical system. This is mainly because the established five parties take state power every eight years for a single term of office in a cyclical order. That means one party would have the opportunity to govern the polity after forty years. This time, it would be the turn of the generation of the sons of that party. In Gadaa System, one can take state power only through an election and only for one single term of office with the possibility of impeachment and removal in the middle of the term of office.

There are two types of successions. One is the succession between parties. It occurs every eight years. One full cycle takes eighty years. *Figure 1.9*. depicts the succession cycle. Note that two names designating the generation of the fathers and the sons, yet they often have contrasting political outlooks. The other is succession between generations. It is the

succession between the two Gadaa genealogical generations. It occurs every forty years. One full cycle the genealogical generation of the five Gadaas takes fourhanded years (see *Figure 1.10* and *Figure 1.14*).

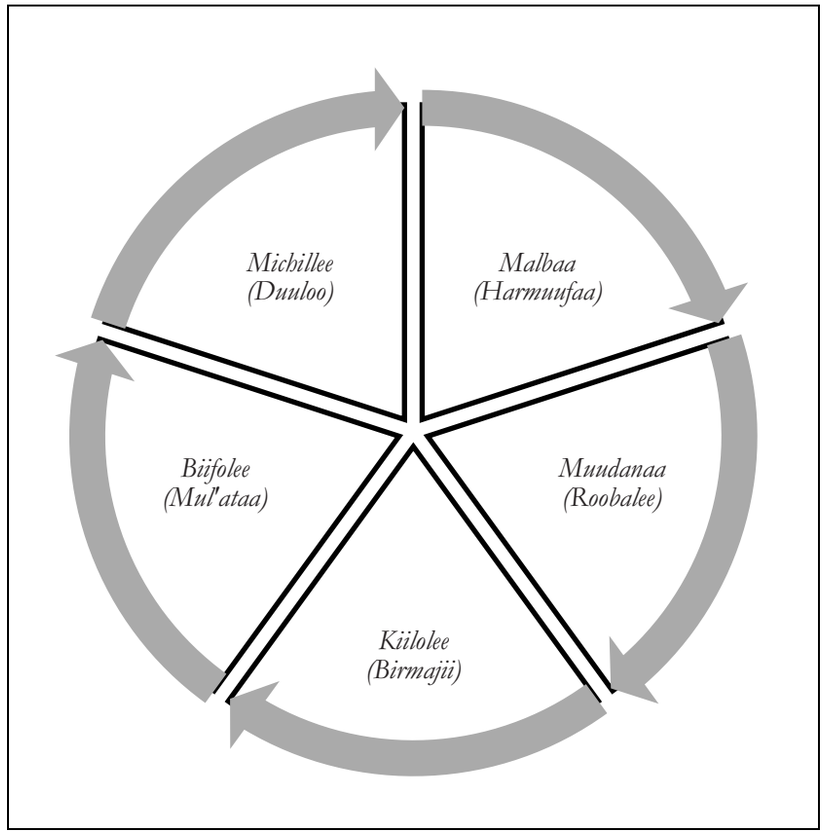


Figure 1.9. Established parties and their succession cycle

In the Gadaa System, fathers and sons are always five grades apart. According to one of the Gadaa principles (constitutions), a son can only become *Luba* forty years after his father had become *Luba*, regardless of his age. This means a son would only join a part that is five parties away from that of his father. The party of his father would always come back after the remaining four parties have come and gone for eight years each. One has to wait for the turn of the party of his father at the right generation of the party to become a member at its first stage during the eight-year window or has to

become inclusion (*maxxaarrii*) in the "wrong" generation unless one changes the party of his father.

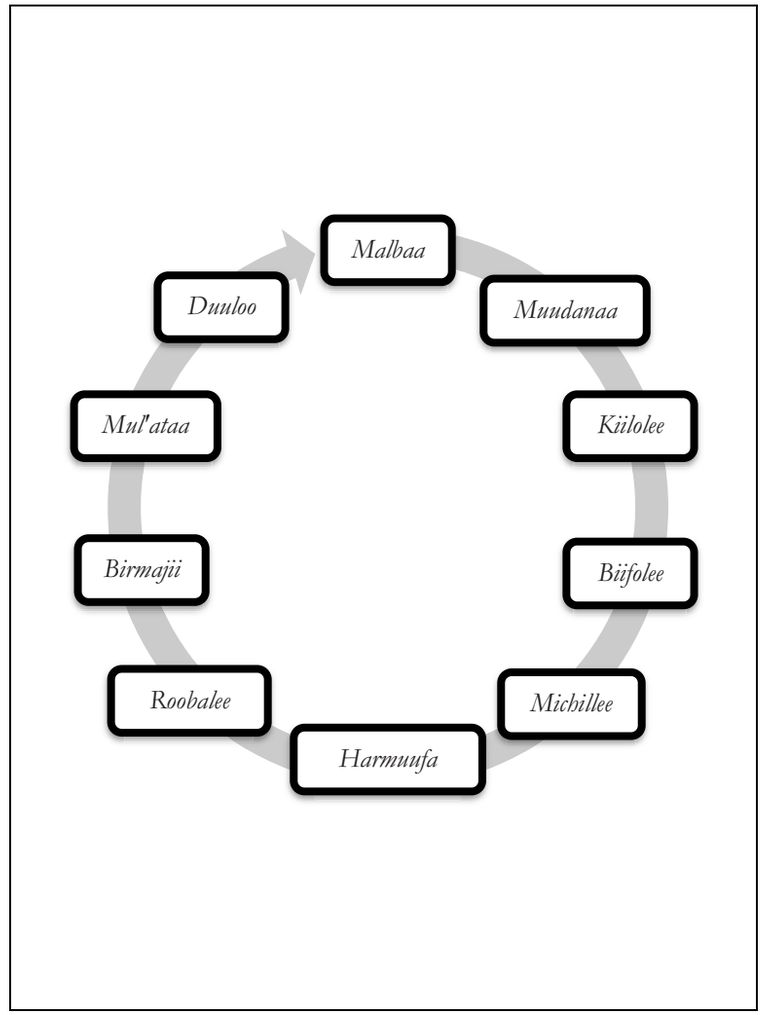


Figure 1.10. Succession cycle of both generations of Gadaas

Father and son, son, and grandson/grandfather are always five Gadaa-grades or five parties apart. *Figure 1.12*. illustrates the relationships among the Gadaa-grades of a father, a son, and a grandfather/grandson.

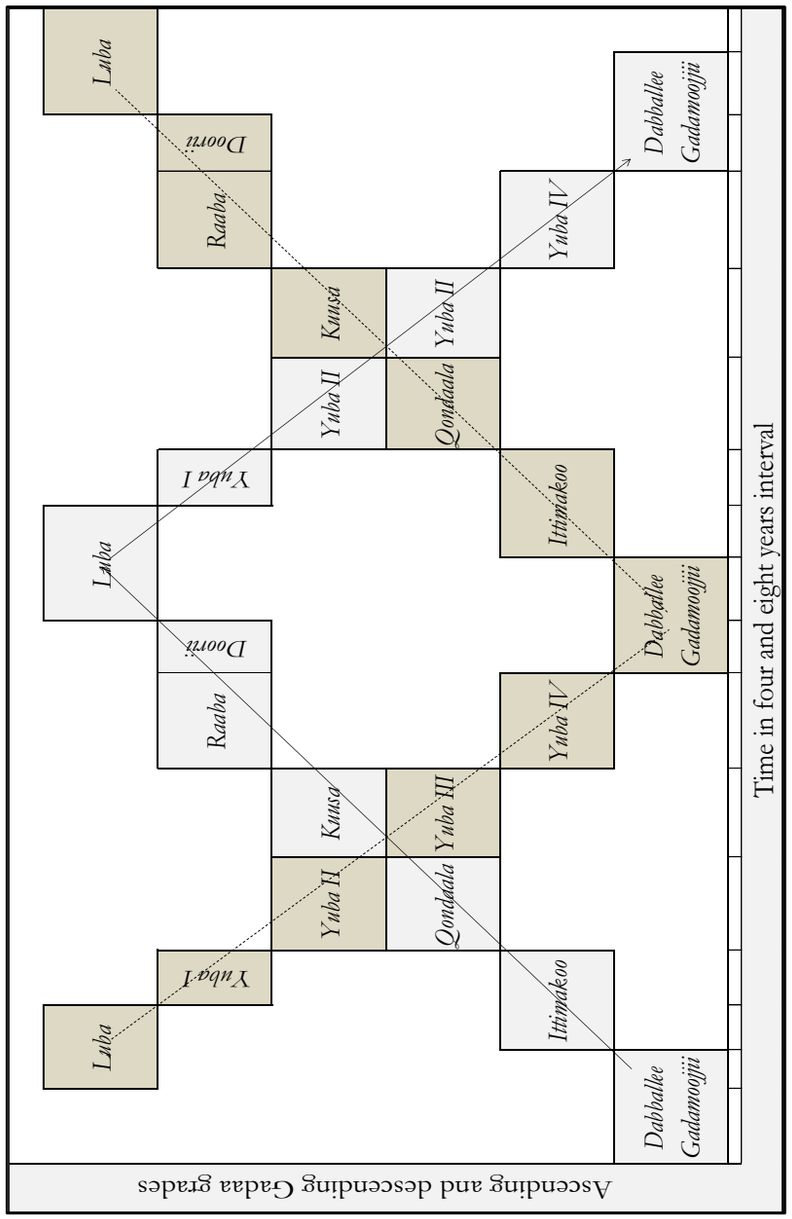


Figure 1.11. Staggered successions of Gadaa Grades (Gadaas of the generation of fathers (٧) and the generation of sons (٨))

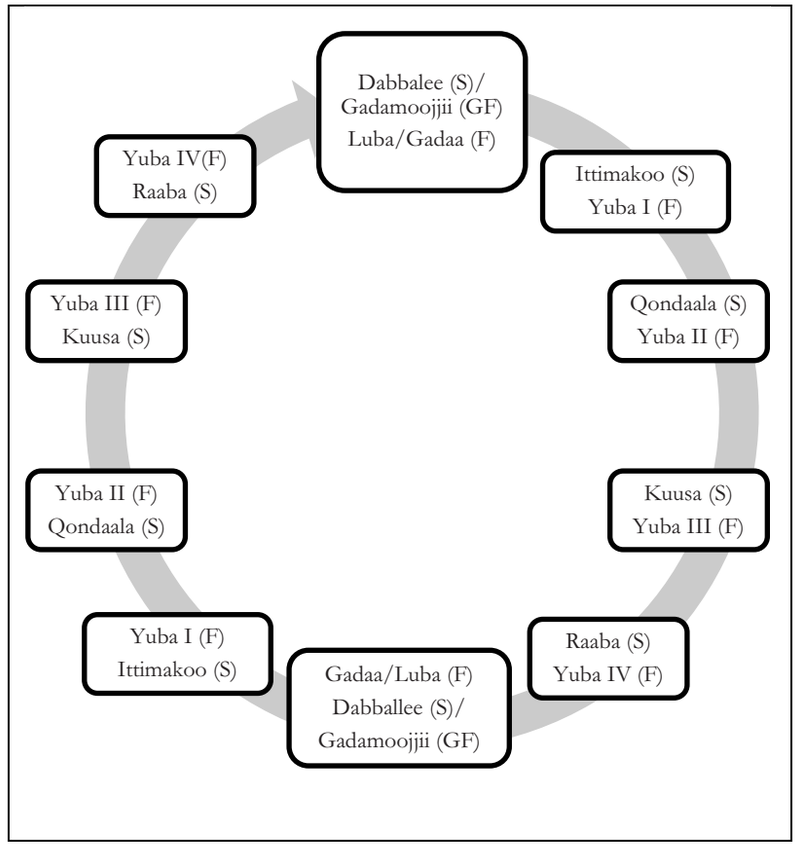

Dabbalee (S)/ Gadamoojjii (GF) Luba/Gadaa (F)
Ittimakoo (S) Yuba I (F)
Qondaala (S) Yuba II (F)
Kuusa (S) Yuba III (F)
Raaba (S) Yuba IV (F)
Gadaa/Luba (F) Dabballee (S)/ Gadamoojjii (GF)
Yuba I (F) Ittimakoo (S)
Yuba II (F) Qondaala (S)
Yuba III (F) Kuusa (S)
Yuba IV(F) Raaba (S)

Figure 1.12. Grandfathers (GF), fathers (F), and sons (S) in Gadaa-grades

Gadaa is a system of overlapping and connecting cyclical events going on at the same time. *Figure 1.13.* illustrates the grade of members of other parties when one party is in power, i.e., at *Luba* grade. For example, when *Malbaa* is *Luba*, *Kiilolee* is *Yuba* II, *Michillee* is *Yuba* IV, etc. Note that the numbers are connecting cyclical grades *within* and *among* the parties (follow the numbers both across the parties and within the parties). In practice, following the numbers, one full cycle within the party takes eighty years, whereas, following all the numbers among the parties takes fourhanded years. Based on Gadaa cycles within cycles, which could be called properly an Oromo Calendar, Oromo oral traditions hold that Gadaa System has reached twelve such cycles, forty-eight centuries (see *Figure 1.14*).

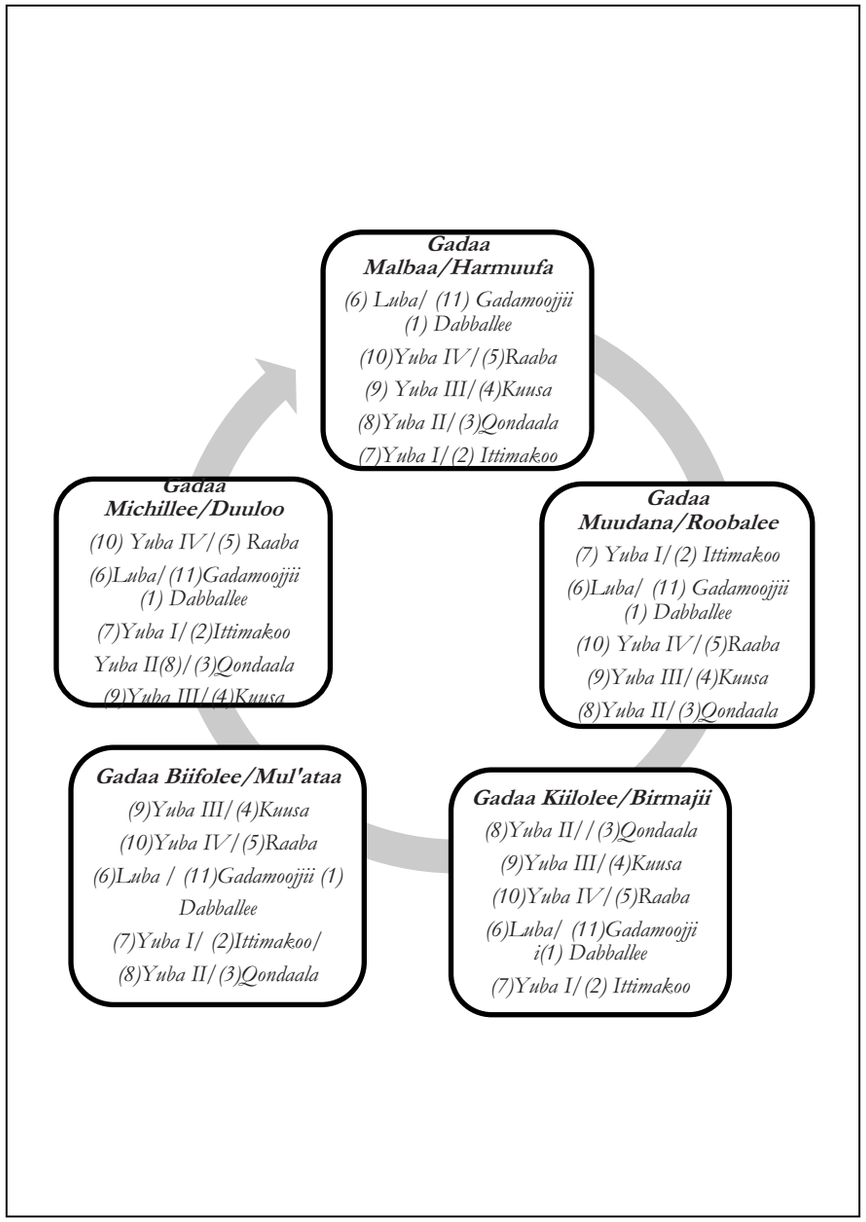


Figure 1.13. The stages of other Gadaas when one Gadaa (party) is in power

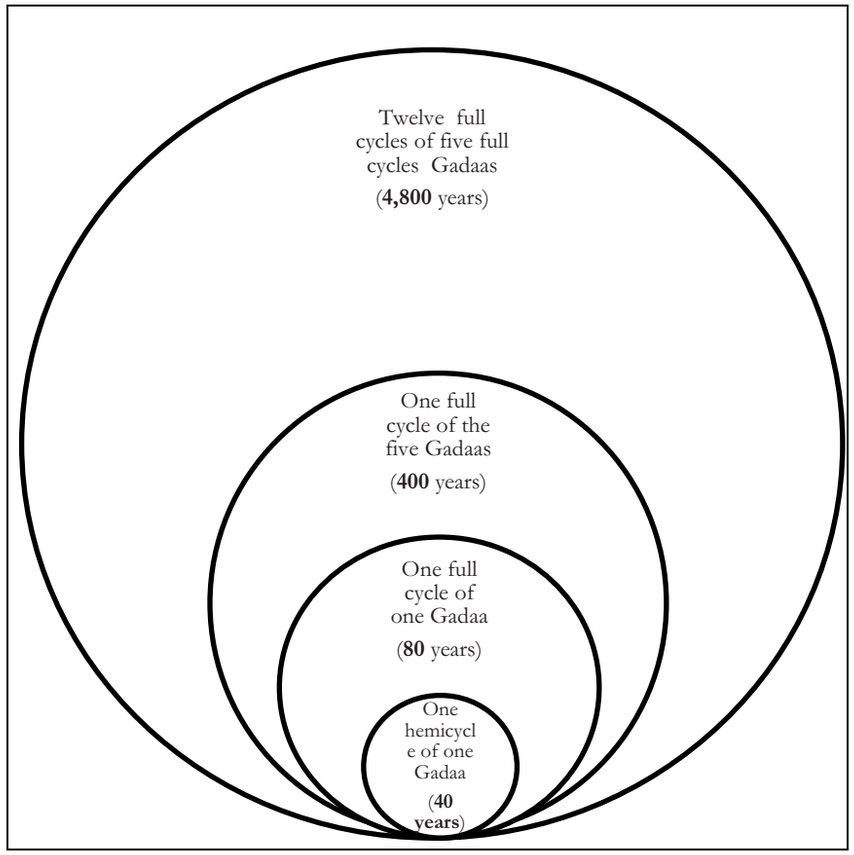

Twelve full cycles of five full cycles Gadaas
(4,800 years)
One full cycle of the five Gadaas
(400 years)
One full cycle of one Gadaa
(80 years)
One hemicycle of one Gadaa
(40 years)

Figure 1.14. Simplified illustration of Gadaa cycles within cycles

1.6. Summary

In this chapter, age-sets and Gadaa-grades of the Gadaa System are differentiated methodically. The age sets are 0–8 years (*Daa'ima*), 8–16 years (*Ijoollee*), 16–24 years (*Qeerroo*), 24–32 years (*Dargaggoo)*, 32–40 years (*Gaheessa*), 40–48 years (*Gameessa*), 48–56 years (*Maanguddoo I*), 56–64 years (*Maanguddoo II*), 64–72 years (*Maanguddoo III*), 72–80 years (*Maanguddoo IV*), and above 80 years (*Jaarsa*). The Gadaa grades are *Dabballee, Ittimakoo, Qondaala, Kuusa, Raaba, Luba, Yuba I, Yuba II, Yuba III, Yuba IV,* and *Gadamoojjii*. The two stratification systems play a key role in the Gadaa System. Understanding

them is the key to understand the Gadaa System and the socio-political organization of the Oromo society.

Age-sets are based strictly on linear age intervals. They are eight-year chronological intervals of biological ages. They guide the roles and responsibilities of the Oromo throughout their life. They are particularly important until full maturity and socio-political autonomy is attained at the age of forty. Cares, education, and pieces of training, roles, and responsibilities are tailored according to age-sets in the Oromo society. Matured age-sets have internal leadership, *hiriyaa* Council.

Gadaa-grade is based strictly on genealogical generations where a period of five Gadaas, one genealogical generation of the forty-year period, must separate the grade of the father and his son. Thus, a son always becomes *Luba* forty years after his father had become *Luba*. It is not the age of the son but the genealogical generation gap between the Gadaa of the generation of fathers and the Gadaa of the generation of sons that determines when the son would become *Luba*. Only the son who is born immediately after the fatherhood ceremony (*Daannisa*) of his father would become *Luba* exactly when he would become forty years old. Once born to the party of his father, a son joins a Gadaa grade not necessarily in the first grade, *Dabballee,* nor when he is under the age of eight. He may join early or late depending on how early or how late he was born from the time his father was in the right period (*dhaloota*) to beget children.

Gadaa-grades serve as leadership development and retirement stages. Members of the grades (*miseensa*) pass through the grades first in progression and then in regression of socio-political responsibilities. The first five sets of grades are developmental grades where members ascend to the most important grade, the Luba (Gadaa) grade. The second set of grades is retirement grades where members retire from public socio-political duties gradually. At each of the grades, members have distinct ritual privileges, passage rites, and socio-political roles and responsibilities. After the third grade, members elect their internal leaders, *Aduulaa* Council. In the sixth grade, these internal party leaders become national leaders. By then, they have their First and Second *Abbaa Gadaas* elected. They form the Gadaa government and lead the polity for eight years. The Gadaa government is government by Councils where the First *Abbaa Gadaa* chairs the *Adunlaa* Council and the two Second *Abbaa Gadaas* chair the two auxiliary councils. In the seventh grade, they retire partially from the socio-political activities.

Retirement is gradual. In the eleventh grade, they retire from political activities fully.

The institution of age-sets and Gadaa-grades are independent of each other. They have nothing to do with each other except by coincidence. Such coincidence occurs when a child is born to a father who just celebrated his fatherhood ceremony. In that case, the age-sets and the Gadaa-grades of the son coincide perfectly except for the staggering grades (*Raaba*, *Luba*, and *Yuba I*) when staggered succession is in practice. Such birth is an ideal "right birth." It is one of the reasons why the names of age-sets and Gadaa-grades overlap among some Oromo communities and mistaken as synonymous by some scholars and students. The two institutions have few things in common: generally, passage rite occurs in both every eight years at the same time (see Table 1.4) and both have eleven grades among most of the Oromo communities.

Politically, the most important Gadaa-grade is *Luba*. It is the pinnacle of political power for members of a party. The political power transfer between the incoming and outgoing parties is in staggered succession. Elected leaders of the *Luba*, *hayyuu Aduulaa*, become *Abbaa Gadaa* of the polity after taking power from the retiring *Luba* four years after they had become *Luba* themselves. During those four years, they are still the Gadaa government in waiting. Accordingly, they will hand over the power four years late to their successors--but exactly after eight years of office term because of the instituted staggered succession system. Staggered succession is a political mechanism that prevents power vacuum and guarantees a smooth transition of power. The four years less stay at the seventh grade compensates the extra four years of Gadaa government in waiting in the fifth grade. The *Luba* organizes the *Caffee* (assembly of the multitudes) of the polity in the middle of their office term.

The *Caffee*, which meets every eight years, performs important tasks. It reviews the "natural laws" and the Gadaa Constitution. It reviews the existing laws, amends them, and makes new laws. It evaluates and reviews the ruing *Luba* (Gadaa) and its government. It makes announcements of First *Abbaa Gadaa* of the upcoming Gadaa government on the transition from *Raaba* to *Doorii,* the election result of the *hayyuu Aduulaa* on the transition of the *Qondaala* to *Kuusaa,* the common name of the *Dabballee* on their induction to Gadaa as *Ittimakoo.* It makes other particularly important

decisions, including passing judgments on important cases that lower structures could not manage and declaring war or peace.

The time of the birth of a son is especially important in the Gadaa System. This is because it is an age-sets and genealogical generation-based system where members progress in age-sets and Gadaa grades. A son is said to be "right born" if he were born between the fatherhood ceremony of his father (*Daannisa*) and the naming ceremony of himself (*Maq-baasa*). If he were born before and after this period of eight years, he would be "early born" or "late born" respectively. In the case of the former, he would become *Luba* in the Gadaa of the generation of sons. Hence, he could be elected *Luba*. In the case of the later, there are two options: If not born (or adopted) so late, he could be rightful *Luba* at an early age in the Gadaa of the generation of sons but with no possibility of being elected *Abbaa Gadaa*. If born or adopted so late, he would be a nominal *Luba* in the Gadaa of the generation of fathers at an advanced age. He becomes an add-on (*maxxaarrii*) to another Gadaa genealogical generation; hence, he would not be elected *Abbaa Gadaa*. The "right born" sons always have a better chance to be elected *Abbaa Gadaa*. From among "right born," only those who are born immediately after the fatherhood ceremony are ideal "right born." Their age-sets and Gadaa-grades, i.e. their age-set ages and Gadaa grade ages, would match perfectly throughout their lifetime. However, only one ideal "right born" son could be born to a couple.

Gadaa system is a cyclical process. The five Gadaas (parties) take power from each other in a cycle every eight years. The Gadaa of the fathers and the Gadaa of the sons (i.e., the Gadaa of the generation of fathers and the Gadaa of the generation of sons) come to power cyclically every forty years. One full cycle of Gadaa takes eighty years. This is one full cycle within the party. One such full of all the five Gadaa parties take four hundred years. Oromo oral traditions hold that the Gadaa System has completed the twelfth of such a cycle, 4800 years.

Notes to Chapter 1

[1] Most writers use 'Gada,' particularly before the advent of *Qubee* (alphabet of the Oromo language) in the early 1990s. In this work, '*Gadaa*' is used but without alteration when in quotations. '*Gadaa*' is how the Oromo pronounce it and write it in their language.

[2] Legesse (1973, 2006) submits a thesis that, originally, the Gadaa System was probably an age-based system upon which the rules of the generation-set system (which made the system unstable and age-heterogeneous) were imposed, ultimately obliging the introduction of a simpler age-set based institution, *Hiriyaa*. By the early 16th century, when the Oromo began their protracted offensive-defensive struggle against the Christian kingdom of Abyssinia and the Islamic Sultanate of Adel, the age-set system was part of the Gadaa System. It is highly likely that the Oromo introduced or re-introduced it for the effective recruitment of warriors.

[3] However, *Buttaa* is an incredibly old ceremony in East Africa. It is recorded in the 9th-century Arabic source (Ayana, 2015).

[4] *Buttaa* war is a form of self-defense and highly localized and very brief outburst of days or weeks. It is an emulation of the formal offensive and defensive military campaigns of the *Luba*. It takes place once every eight years but only during the *Buttaa* season.

[5] If they do so, they seek recognition from the peers and the public during ritual ceremonies and election campaigns. However, they must prove that what they seek recognition for. Heroism without proof has no place among the Oromo.

[6] It is double-faced layered parallels of two hand-woven cotton sheets of about four meters long and two meters wide bordered with a broad line of red thread, about three inches at both ends. The two-layered sheets are interlaced along the parallel and folded at the center to form a four-layer cotton blanket called *bullukkoo*. A slightly smaller version of it is known as *gaabii*.

[7] Among the *Boorana*, the outgoing *Abbaa Gadaa* awards the new *Abbaa Gadaa* symbolic decorated horse and fattened bull. The horse and the bull symbolize power and wealth, respectively.

[8] *Finna* is a hierarchical concept for measures of socio-economic development. Accordingly, *Guddina* (growth), *Gabbina* (augmentation), *Bal'ina* (opening out), *Badhaadhina* (prosperity), *Hormaata* (abundance), *Dagaaga* (excess), *and Dagaa-Hora* (wealth accumulation) are the progressive *finna*.

Chapter 2

Gadaa Constitution

2.1. Introduction

Oromo oral tradition holds that the Gadaa System has fifty principles and five hundred-fifty laws. It is, as noted in the *Introduction*, summarized in a maxim: "*Heerri shantama; seerri dhibba shaniif shantama!*" It means the number of the articles of the constitution is fifty; the number of the laws are five hundred and fifty. This maxim was employed as a guide in the reconstruction of the Gadaa Constitution in this work.

Gadaa System has an unwritten constitution (*heera*) and many publicly legislated laws (*seera*) that are audited every eight years. These have been learned by heart and kept in mind as oral chronicles (*argaa-dhageettii*) by the Oromo people in general and by the erudite and talented experts of law known as *hayyuu guddicha*, the senior *hayyuu*. Every eight years, a designated senior *hayyuu* or group thereof presents the *heera* and the *seera* of the Oromo to the *Caffee* assembly for review. They do so by oral recitation. The constitution and the laws of the Oromo are thus subject to revisions and amendments based on the need. A national *Caffee* could stay in session for weeks, or even months, until the necessary part of the constitution or the laws are amended with consensus; or the needed new laws are promulgated with no objection but with full acceptance and ownership of the Oromo.

The *hayyuu guddicha* are Oromo scholars of laws with the exceptional talent of understanding and memorizing laws. Every Oromo polity can have more than one of them but one designate. Once proven worthy of the duty, they never retire unless laid up by illness or old age. Their dedicated duty in the affairs of the polity for the rest of their lives is memorizing the constitution and the laws of the Oromo and interpreting them as may be necessary. The Council of senior *hayyuu* also plays the role of supreme justice.

The *heera* and *seera* of the Gadaa government have structured the Oromo society based on age-sets and generation-sets. The former stratifies the society in eleven eight-year age-sets. Similarly, the latter divides members of the party into ten eight-year grades. The two are cross-cutting institutions.

The *heera* and *seera* have also established political parties. There are five *Gadaa*s (parties) in the Gadaa System. These *Gadaa*s are categorized further into two: the five *Gadaa*s of the generation of fathers and the five *Gadaa*s of the generation of sons. The sons enter the Gadaa-grades exactly forty years after their fathers. In other words, the sons must wait for the Gadaa of their fathers to return after one hemicycle of the Gadaa, one generation, which takes forty years (see chapter 1).

Gadaa constitution is the foundation of the Gadaa System. It is formed by the free will of the Oromo in the distant past. Legesse (2000) suggests that it "runs parallel to the Magna Carta, the foundation of British constitutional thought" which is "is a very primitive document compared to the Oromo constitution" (p. 258-259). However, unlike Magna Carta and modern constitutions, it is preserved not with ink on papers of the state but with amorous ritual sounds in the hearts and minds of the Oromo. As such, it is not in the custody of elites or groups of people: it is the common knowledge of every average Oromo. It is one of the rarest constitutions.

Recently, however, scholars have started to single out the principles of the Gadaa constitution. The forerunner in this regard is Asmarom Legesse, a true giant of knowledge on the Gadaa System. In his book, *Oromo Democracy: An Indigenous African Political System* (Trenton, NJ, and Asmara, Eritrea: The Red Sea Press, 2006), a scrupulously verified sequel to his earlier book, *GADA: Three Approaches to the Study of African Societies* (New York, USA: The Free Press, 1973), Legesse, has detailed the "principles of Oromo democracy" as an "explorations in African political thought."

These "principles" are indeed articles of the oral Gadaa constitution, *heera* Gadaa, and should always be treated as such. Legesse (2006) introduced

them as a constitution. He states, "Here then is the unwritten constitution of the Oromo, an outline of the basic principles of Oromo Democracy, of the ideas and precepts that guide their political life and serve as the foundation of their political institutions" (p. 199).

According to Legesse (2006, p. 198), the eighteen "unwritten constitution" / "basic principles" of Oromo Democracy are:

1. The Law that Stands Above All Men
2. The Principle of Accountability: The Role of Confession and Penalty
3. Subordination of Warriors to Deliberative Assembly
4. Man-made Laws and the Great Lawmakers
5. Supreme Authority of the General Assembly
6. Government by Council and Assemblies: Seniority and Equality
7. Term of Office and Measurement of Time
8. Limitation of Office to a Single Term
9. A Period of Testing: Time Gap between Election and Investiture
10. Use of History as a Precedent and Ethical Guide
11. Hereditary and Elective Leadership
12. The Principle of Staggered Succession
13. Alliance of Alternate Groups
14. The Problem of Discontinuity of Authority
15. The Principle of Balanced Opposition
16. Distribution of Power across Generations
17. Separation of Powers: Functional and Spatial
18. Separation of the Political and Ritual Domains

The Gadaa constitution shall be discussed in this section in two parts. In the first part, the writer shall make a humble summary of what the Gadaa polymath has discussed. The summary of the 18 principles (Gadaa constitution) from Legesse (2006, Chapter 5) shall be presented, some of them with slightly modified headings. In rare cases, it would be necessary to elaborate at length to capture fully not only the direct meanings but also the underlying assumptions. In the second part, the writer shall submit more of such principles, based on common knowledge of Oromo people.

The goal here is to offer a comprehensive, yet exploratory, collection of articles of the unwritten Gadaa constitution. The hope is that scholars will build on it in the broader effort of reconstructing a comprehensive and more accurate written Gadaa constitution.

2.2. Gadaa Principles According to Asmarom Legesse

2.2.1. Principle of supremacy of the law (*Olaantummaa Seeraa*)

Throughout their recorded history, the Oromo are known to have been a legalistic society. They make laws in consensus after lengthy debates. Once it is made in such a way, the laws are said to belong to *Waaqa*. Breaking it would be a transgression of the blessing of the *Waaqa*. This becomes the metaphysical source of the legitimacy of the laws.

Once passed, the laws shall become binding to everybody. Neither the *Abbaa Gadaas* nor the *Abbaa Duulaa* nor the *Abbaa Muudaa* nor the *Qaalluu* nor the *ayyaantuu* nor the *hayyuu* nor the judges nor the legal experts nor anyone would be above the law at any time and under any circumstance. The same law punishes or rewards every mature man and woman alike. In front of the law, every Oromo is equal regardless of his elected or hereditary position or his wealth or wisdom. The Oromo have laws for everything, including for care of their pets and other animals, both domestic and wild. In Oromo society, no one is above the law, and everyone is judged by the same law.

2.2.2. Principle of accountability (*Qorannaa*)

In the Gadaa system, everyone who has authority is accountable. Confession and penalty have a role to play in ensuring accountability. Because the people elect them, the Gadaa leaders are responsible for both their own generation (*luba*) and other generations of the Oromo. In other words, they are responsible for their *miseensa* (Gadaa grade) from among them are elected and to the Oromo nation that they lead during their eight-term of office. The Gadaa class is the Gadaa-grade in power (the *Luba*). It is equivalent to a modern office holding party in the function of governing the nation. As elected leaders of the entire Oromo nation, they are responsible for the Oromo people; hence, to the national assembly (*Caffee*). Because they

are elected from among the people based on their generational turn in the Gadaa cycle, they are responsible to the people. They have no other private duty in office than serving the people. To discharge this duty lawfully, they are vested with full authority together with commensurate accountability.

Their accountability is their direct answerability to the people. The people exercise their power by evaluating the *Abbaa* Gadaas individually and the Gadaa Council collectively. Individual evaluation starts at the early nomination of potential *Abbaa* Gadaas by their peer members (*miseensa*) and goes up to the end when few of the nominees shall be elected to the Gadaa Council. Collective evaluations take place in the middle of the eight years duration when the *Abbaa Gadaas* are in power and exercise the state power jointly as a council.

In the middle of its eight years lease of national power, the Gadaa Council appears in front of the *Caffee* and presents its performance report. The *Gumi/Caffee*, the local *Caffee*, the *hayyuu*, or private citizens also present their grievances. The *Gumi* makes detailed evaluations of the performance of the governing Gadaa Council or individual member of the council based on his separate duties. Depending on its findings, the *Caffee* may punish, reprimand, or praise the Gadaa Council. The punishment may include removing the *Abbaa Gadaa* from office, ousting the Gadaa Council in total, or dismissing some of, or one of its members, prosecuting the Council or its members or cursing and exiling them. The presiding *Abbaa* Gadaa is at the forefront in these processes. The *Abbaa Gadaa*s are also evaluated similarly at the local/regional level. These are the national and regional evaluations of the Gadaa Government.

2.2.3. Principle of subordination of warriors to a deliberative assembly (*Waraana*)

This principle subordinates leaders of warriors, including *Abbaa Duulaas*, to the deliberative *Caffee*. Only the *Caffee* has the power to declare war, peace, victory, or defeat. This has made the declarations of war a matter of "deliberative act" that the *Caffee* alone, the source of all public power, decides. The *Abbaa Duulaa* executes only the decision of the *Caffee* and the Gadaa Council. In such a way, a clear distinction is made that the body that is empowered to declare wars is different from the body that is entitled by

law to execute the acts of the war. The warriors or the warrior age-sets have no power to declare war. They must receive an order from the *Caffee* of the nation for national defense and national offensive campaigns or from the *Caffee* or the Gadaa Council, for emergency regional deference. No group, neither the age-sets not the Gadaa-grades in the Gadaa System, both at the national and regional level, has the power to declare war. Legesse (2006) remarks, "What the Gadaa decides the age-set carries out" (p. 205).

In Oromo Gadaa democracy, the war leaders are not only prohibited from declaring war by themselves, but their term of office is also limited to eight years. *Abbaa Duulaa*, therefore, cannot cultivate themselves to be warlords and threaten the democratic and republican nature of the Gadaa System. Every war is assigned its one-term leader. Once the war is over, even within the same Gadaa period, the *Abbaa Duulaa* is no more a war leader. Political authority comes only from election according to the Gadaa principles (Gadaa Constitution), not from battlefield valor or any other form of alleged sources of legitimacy, as known in non-democratic societies.

2.2.4. Principle of man-made laws (*Seera Tumaa*)

This principle, which Legesse (2006) titled it "Man-made Laws and the Great Lawmakers" is the principle of making and owning the laws. Impersonated great lawmakers have been the *Abbaa Gadaas* of the *Luba* in power. "The great lawmakers" have only been leaders and facilitators of the legislative process. Thus, it would be proper to rephrase the principle as the "principle of man-made laws."

The laws of the Oromo are made not by a single leader or group of leaders or the *Abbaa* Gadaa but with the deliberative assembly. There is no supreme body or person or class or exceptional jurist elite or ritual leader or patriarchal lawgiver or divine force or *Abbaa* Gadaa or *Qaalluu* or anyone or anybody else who is the source or who gives the *seera tumaa*: it can only be made by the deliberative *Caffee* of the Oromo. The only source of man-made laws is the Oromo people themselves. They have always made their laws in a deliberative process. The deliberations for making law among the Oromo communities have been very thorough, farsighted, and highly disciplined where wisdom and pragmatism are at the center stage. They take an audit of the existing laws every eight years. They may amend their existing laws in an equally rigorous process just as when making new laws. If a group of Oromo

(or even a private person) proposes a change of a particular law, the law could be changed or altered according to the established Gadaa constitution and applicable laws. *Abbaa Gadaas* have the role of a participating facilitator in the Oromo law-making process.

Nevertheless, historically some *Abbaa Gadaa* have made notable contributions in the law-making process either by initiating the proposition of many laws or by leaving their marks in the debate during the makings of some of the laws. Two well-known such *Abbaa* Gadaas are *Dawwe Gobbo* of *Boorana* and *Makko Bili* of *Maccaa*. These *Abbaa Gadaas* earned for the selves the name and fame associated with the laws of Oromo by their leadership and participation in the deliberative assembly or by being exceptionally eloquent during the debate or by being exceptionally enthusiastic in enforcing and protecting the law. They were not the lawgivers. They were neither patriarch with the power to formulate and give the laws single-handedly nor divine inspired. They were given credit in the folklore of the Oromo simply for the popular laws that were made during their Gadaa leadership.

2.2.5. Principle of supreme authority (*Caffee*)

This principle dictates that the only source and the only owner of all powers in the Oromo nation is the national assembly (*Caffee*) that has a regular session every eight years unless exceptional conditions demand otherwise. The importance and authority of the *Caffee* have been summarized by Legesse (2006) in the following words:

> **In the Oromo democratic traditions, the highest authority does not reside in the great lawmakers who are celebrated by the people, nor the rulers who are elected to govern for eight years, nor the electors and the ritual leaders who hold their office for life by hereditary rights, nor the age sets and age regiments who furnish the military forces, nor the *Abbaa* dula who lead their people in battles. It resides, instead, in the open national assembly, at which all the Gada councilors and assemblies, aspirants and in power, active and retired, are represented, and the Warra Qallu, the electors, participate as observers.**

> **The meeting that takes place every eight years review the conduct of the ruling Gada Council, punish any violators of law; remove any or all of them from office, should that become necessary. In such sessions, a retired *Abbaa* Gada presides. The primary purpose of the meeting of the national assembly, however, are 'to re-examine the laws of the land, to reiterate them in public, to make new laws if necessary, and to settle disputes that were not resolved by lower levels in their judicial organization'.** [All emphasis in the original] (p. 211)

2.2.6. Principle of government by Councils (Yaa'a)

An assembly of elected *Abbaa* Gadaa leads the Gadaa government. Among the *Boorana* Oromo, six Gadaa councilors (*Hayyuu Aduulaa*) hold the topmost political power, the Gadaa Office, for an eight years single term. Among these, one of them, the most senior, is elected to preside as *Abbaa* Gadaa *fiixxee* (apex). He, however, has no exclusive power to make decisions alone. He remains equal to the rest as "the first among equals" but to take the initiative and show leadership. In this role, he summons the Gadaa Council/Assembly for meetings, ensure attendance and discipline of the assembly according to the laws, oversees the deliberation of the assembly and presents propositions for consensus, declare an end of discussion after a resolution is reached, and persuade dissenters, if any, to accept the resolution. He is neither different from other members of the council from being "the first among equals," nor does he have more power than the rest. This equality in political power among members of the Gadaa Council is not affected by natural seniority. The Council always makes decisions unanimously.

The Council is however structured into governing, supportive and opposition councils in such a way that the supportive council is divided into two and the junior council are attached to the governing and the two supportive councils, which are heads by the first *Abbaa Gadaa* and the two deputies respectively (see the discussion under section 3.3.2.6 and 4.4.).

Hence, the Gadaa Government, in general, is multi-headed and headed by the Council; not by an individual *Abbaa Gadaa*.

2.2.7. Principle of the term of office and measurement of time (*Dhaha*)

The Oromo elect their Gadaa leaders for one term of office. That one term is constitutionally determined to be eight years. The eight years office term begins and ends with an elaborate ceremony known as *baallii, bokkuu, kalaalaa, luugoo,* or *jaarraa*. The year and the place of the hand over are always known because it is in the laws. The day of the hand over is determined by the *ayyaantuu*, the time reckoning experts. Once the date is determined, the handover ceremony must take place. No *Abbaa Gadaa* in office would refuse or deliberately delay the handover. One complete eight-year of Gadaa government makes one epoch of the history of the Oromo. The Gadaa chronology is built based on the name of the *Abbaa Gadaa fiixxee* of such an epoch. As such, it serves as a standard measurement of time.

2.2.8. Principle of orderly succession and limitation of office to a single term (*Saddeeta*)

The Oromo do not have the concept of "second term" of office or election to the same office nor do they have any possibility to extend their term in office for more than eight years. An attempt to do so is "morally offensive and legally prohibited" (Legesse, 2006, p. 219). Instead, they practice an orderly succession of the citizens every eight years to the next grade of the Gadaa System. Accordingly, they pass power from one Gadaa class to the next in line every eight years. They have done this for centuries of their recorded history. The period of power, office term, is limited to eight years by the Gadaa constitution.

2.2.9. Principle of a period of testing: time gap between election and investiture (*Gabbisa*)

Unlike the practice in Western democracies where winners of a brief political campaign are elected to the highest office and immediately resume power, the Oromo people give ample time for grooming their leaders. There is a time gap of two decades between the time the future *Abbaa Gadaa* is first elected as leader of the *Kuusaa* grade (apprentice warriors) in his party and later as the leader, *Abbaa Gadaa*, of all the people at all Gadaa-grades. This period is generally 20 years and spans through the *Kuusaa*, *Raaba*, and *Raaba Doorii* and the *Luba* internship period of four years in four-year staggered succession. These years (two decades) are testing years for the candidate to become *Abbaa Gadaa* and take the national power. During this testing period, the candidates would be groomed for public office. If they fail on the necessary criteria for leadership, targeted leadership training could aid them to correct the failure or replaced in time before they take the highest power.

2.2.10. Principle of using historic precedents as cautionary or exemplary models (*Daaccii)*

The Oromo people believe that the precedent of eight generations ago exerts pressure on the present generation and its leaders. A period of eight generations, *daaccii*, is also considered an important epoch in the history of the Oromo. Legesse (1973) describes *daaccii* as "the mystical influence of history on the present course of events" (p. 194).

At a full cycle of *daaccii* or within the cycles in it, the precedents are believed to revisit the Oromo. The precedents include natural calamities and events, heroic and anti-heroic leaderships of *Abbaa Gadaas*, and the fortunes and misfortunes of the Oromo nation and their *Abbaa Gadaas*. These precedents, if they had happened in the last 360 years, are believed to be truly relevant to the present generation. The present *Abbaa Gadaas*, therefore, must be aware of them and expect history might repeat itself. The *Abbaa Gadaa* in power must be aware of the precedents and be prepared to mitigate them. For this purpose, the *Abbaa Gadaa* (if not familiar with the precedents) may hire "men of knowledge, historians, and time reckoning experts" as his critics and adversaries might do (Legesse, 2006). In doing so, the Gadaa

government uses historical precedents, particularly the negative ones, to avoid repeating mistakes that have been chronicled in the past 320–360 years.

In general, however, they have constituted that Gadaa leaders and the Oromo nation of the 9th generation must learn from both the positive and the negative history of the past eight genealogical generations.

2.2.11. Principle of the complementary role of hereditary and elective leadership (*wal-ukaa*)

The Oromo elect e the political and military leaders. The spiritual leaders, the *Qaalluu*, however, are hereditary. The former is solely concerned with the service to the will of the people. The latter is mostly concerned with the spiritual services to the people. Historically, the two have been influencing each other, even though so much so the latter than the former, as they have influenced the Gadaa elections for centuries. The laws ban the *Qaalluu* from taking secular offices. Among the *Boorana* Oromo, "the authority to oversee the election of political leaders has been removed from the Qallu [*Qaalluu*] Council and returned to the Gadaa institution" (Legesse, 2006, p. 225). Nonetheless, the *Qaalluu* have a noteworthy influence on the Gadaa institution through their leadership in political rituals. Both the elected and hereditary leadership have a complementary role in the socio-political life of the Oromo.

2.2.12. Principle of staggered succession (*Baallii*)

Gadaa System ensures continuity of the Gadaa government because the *Abbaa Gadaa*-elects wait in preparation for four or five years before taking power and the outgoing *Abbaa Gadaas* remain in office for corresponding years after all other Gadaa grades had changed grades (Legesse, 2006). In other words, at the time of power transfer, all other *miseensa* are in the middle of the grade (see the discussion under section 1.3.6.1 for details). This system eliminates "the problem of the *convergence of destabilizing events"* [emphasis in the original] (p. 228), and makes the practice of the staggered succession of the Gadaa democracy more effective than that of the USA. The American democracy where unequal two, four, and six years cycles of the election of

the representatives, the president, and the senators respectively "do not produce a proper pattern of staggered succession" (p. 228).

2.2.13. Principle of an alliance of alternating groups (*Walaanaa-Qadadduu*)

This principle is "based on the common African assumption that adjacent groups are adversaries and alternate groups are allies" (Legesse, 2006, p. 299). The Gadaa government is led by alternating membership groups in an interlocked age-set, party, and generation-set succession. Adjacent age-sets and adjacent Gadaa (parties), and adjacent generation sets are adversaries, their corresponding alternates are allies. For example, the generation of fathers and the generation of sons are adversaries; the generation of grandfathers and the generation of grandsons are allies. "*This device converts the linear hierarchy into a pattern of balanced opposition and serves as a method of ensuring that the rights of lower groups are protected against arbitrary power exercised by higher groups*" [emphasis in the original] (Legesse, 2006, p. 229). Such adversarial and alliance position of the adjacent and alternate groups is part of the inbuilt balanced opposition in the Oromo polity. In practice, this is reflected in the political orientation of the parties, the Gadaa grades, the age-sets, and the generation-sets where the adjacent are adversaries to each other and the alternate are allies. They are known respectively as *qadadduu* and *walaanna* among the *Boorana* and *Karrayyuu*.

2.2.14. Principle of the problem of discontinuity of authority (*Cita*)

The problem of discontinuity of authority is related to ensuring the continuity of authority when governments change. In Gadaa System, the constitution, the *Qaalluu* Council, the staggered succession, the *Garba Council* ('Shadow government'), men of knowledge (*hayyuu*), the traditional elders, and the principle of *Daaccii* are sustainers of authority during the momentary change of government from one Gadaa to the next, and when, in case, some delays in the formation of a government or unexpected disruption of the Gadaa government occurs.

2.2.15. Principle of balanced opposition (*Gita*)

The Oromo have designed a mechanism of ensuring balanced political opposition, possibly maintaining hierarchy in warfare, by creating the moiety system where every political entity is divided into two balanced but counterpoised halves who share the political offices, including equal distribution of representatives of the two moieties in the governing Gadaa Council. Issues of entrenchment that may arise because the first *Abbaa Gadaa* must be elected from either of the moieties and that members of the same moiety may succeed each other repeatedly could be resolved partly by the principle of alliances of alternate groups (see above) which converts a hierarchy into balanced oppositions. Legesse (2006) remarks:

> It is a mark of the virtuosity of Oromo lawmakers and remarkable aspects of the African genius that our ancestors invented a method of converting any hierarchy into balanced opposition and thus limiting the excesses associated with hierarchical organizations. (p. 233)

2.2.16. Principle of distribution of power across generations and age-sets (*Qooddata*)

In the Oromo democracy "power is distributed across three genealogical generations and ten or more gada [Gadaa] classes" (Legesse, 2006, p. 236). The age-sets, the Gadaa-grades, and the generation-sets are autonomous and self-governing under the Gadaa System. Starting from the age-set of *Qeerroo* (16–24 years) or the *Qondaala* grade of Gadaa, both active and passive political participation are unavoidable throughout the life of every Oromo man. Along with their advance in life, the Oromo acquire self-governing power progressively from their predecessors and hand it over gradually to their successors every eight years. Besides, power is distributed vertically between the generation of fathers and the generation of sons. As a result, political power in Oromo democracy is distributed effectively across generations and age-sets.

2.2.17. Principle of functional and spatial separation of powers between *Gadaa* and *Qaalluu (Wal-laga)*

Among the Oromo power is shared both vertically and horizontally by the *Gumii* (assembly of the multitude), Gadaa (elected Gadaa leaders), *Qaalluu* (hereditary moiety leaders, and electors), and *Hiriyaa* (elected age-set and regimental leaders). Within Gadaa, power is separated functionally into executive, legislative, and judiciary. The *Qaalluu* institution stands in the same footing with Gadaa. *Hiriyaa* is a subordinate of Gadaa, which in turn is subordinate to the *Caffee,* as do the *Qaalluu*. All four institutions have functionally separate powers. The *Qaalluu* and the Gadaa have mutually exclusive functions. Besides, among the *Boorana*, they are separated spatially: the Gadaa Councils are mobile while the *Qaalluu* Councils are sedentary.

The *Abbaa Muudaa* (head of the *Qaalluu*) and the *Abbaa Gadaa* meet only during one spiritual and one political event. They meet during the ceremony of *Muudaa* (Gadaa leaders' pay homage to the ritual leaders) for the former and during power transfer ceremony (*baallii/bokkuu*) and the *Caffee* assembly for the latter. During the *Caffee* assembly the newly elected *Hayyuu Adoolaa* and the three future *Abbaa Gadaas* of the upcoming governing party are proclaimed (*lallaba*). During the *baallii/bokkuu* the outgoing and the incoming *Abbaa Gadaa*s exchange the insignia of the state power.

2.2.18. Principle of separation of political and ritual domains (*Laguu*)

The Oromo make distinctions between ritual and political activities. Rituals are part of their political life. The ritual leaders (*Qaalluu*) and the political leaders (*Abbaa Gadaas*) have distinct roles, and they exchange positions of seniority according to whether the event of attendance is ritual or political. In the former, the *Qaalluu* takes seniority and the power of blessing. In the latter, the *Abbaa Gadaa* takes the position of seniority and the powers to decide, to punish, or to curse. In the absence of *Qaalluu*, *Abbaa Gadaas* may make blessings in rituals as they often do on political and thanksgiving events. Unlike the Gadaa leaders, ritual leaders do not bear arms, shed blood, kill, or take part in warfare.

2.3. More Gadaa Principles

Professor Asmarom Legesse's work that has produced the above principles is based mainly on empirical research conducted in the 1970s among the *Boorana* Oromo of southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya and several decades of reflection on it. It also has drawn much from the testimony of a "most knowledgeable" elderly *hayyuu* from *Boorana* with whom he double-checked all the principles that he had identified, except one. Nonetheless, his work draws all its direct inputs from the Gadaa practices among the Oromo of southern Ethiopia and Northern Kenya, the *Boorana*, from a limited duration of personal observations and corresponding field notes, and one information and knowledge-rich person.

As such, though the *Boorana* have been the guardian of the Gadaa System of the Oromo, the study may be constrained on external validity. As a result, the list has excluded many principles that have been applied throughout the Oromo nation. Besides, those principles that have become common wisdom may have been overlooked.

With cautious inference to the Oromo traditional laws, culture, traditions, value systems, way of life, and the Gadaa System itself, and taking the perspective of an insider to the System on one hand and being cognizant of the principles that have already been identified, on the other hand, more principles may readily be identified. The added principles that are common knowledge in the Gadaa System and still partly in practice in multiple Oromo polities are the following:

2.3.19. Principle of equality (*Qixxee*)

Gadaa System has constituted the equality of humankind. The Oromo people cherish and celebrate humanity. In the Oromo worldview, in general, and in the Gadaa constitution, in particular, every human being is created equal. The Oromo believe strongly in the equality of humankind. Any person is considered equal to an Oromo just for being a human: no other criteria are needed. It is natural for human beings to be equal as they are born so. Even non-Oromo and former enemies of the Oromo who wish to join the Oromo polity according to the Gadaa System are treated as equals to the Oromo. If they voluntarily choose to join the Gadaa System (the Oromo Democracy),

they will have every political right as any Oromo according to the Gadaa constitution and the laws of the Oromo.

2.3.20. Principle of unity (*Tokkummaa*)

The first political principle of the Oromo nation is unity. The Oromo people give precedence to everything that unites in all aspects of their social, political, economic, cultural, and ritual lives. They created the Gadaa System based on the unity of the Oromo. It unifies the Oromo across every spectrum of life. It has constituted the indivisibility of the Oromo nation and the Oromo country on any other ground than those instituted by the Gadaa System for effective regional and local self-administration under the pan-Oromo Gadaa government. The Oromo are one nation and one people; they have one government, the Gadaa government. The fact that, regardless of the political border between Kenya and Ethiopia, the Oromo people of southern Ethiopia have continued to take part in one Gadaa government that crosses the Ethiopia-Kenya border reflects this oneness of the Oromo. However, the unity of the Oromo nation has been challenged from within and from without continuously; more so as the political power of the Gadaa System continued to decline.

2.3.21. Principle of covenant (*Kakuu*)

This principle is related to the unity of the Oromo. It is a testament to the unity and harmony of the Oromo nation. According to this principle, every Oromo has entered a covenant to uphold the unity and honor of the Oromo nation, to preserve the truth and *kaawoo*, to avoid violence towards a fellow Oromo or Oromo community. The immensely popular element of the covenant is the unity of the Oromo, *tokkummaa Oromoo*. The principle was broken multiple times in the past. Following the decline of the Gadaa System over centuries and it is further weakening in recent political enterprises of the Ethiopian federation, not much of the covenant of the Oromo is in practice today. Nonetheless, it is still valid and could be improved. As the Gadaa System would continue to be strengthened, the Oromo might, once again, hold to the social covenant that would sustain them for centuries or millennia to come.

2.3.22. Principle of Five Parties (*Shanan Gadaa*)

The Gadaa System has constituted five balanced Gadaa parties (*Shanan Gadaa*). The five parties of the generation of fathers are succeeded by the five corresponding Gadaa parties of the generation of sons in a cycle of forty years. The five Gadaas are fixed by the Gadaa constitution from the very beginning in a way that it guarantees every Oromo to have the opportunity to be *Abbaa Gadaa* in his lifetime and to be able to exercise the leadership and administration of the nation. In doing so, these five Gadaas (Gadaa parties) also ensure that both the generation of fathers and the generation of sons have equal opportunity to be Gadaa leaders and form their respective Gadaa governments that lead the polity for eight years.

Separation of the parties genealogically into the Gadaa of fathers and the Gadaa of sons does not double the number of parties. The separation of the Gadaa of the two generations by name does not mean that the number of Gadaa parties is ten nor does it mean that the son joins another Gadaa than that of his father's. The Gadaa parties of the Oromo are five; the Gadaa constitution fixed it. The five parties are balanced naturally in membership and social stratification of the kinship structure because members are allocated naturally to each party based on natural random birth. If a man belongs to a party, all his children (male and female) necessarily belong to that party. A son only becomes a member of the party of his father, though it may have a different name.

2.3.23. Principle of generation-sets (*Dhalootaa*)

Gadaa System has constitutionally structured the Oromo nation into two active generation-sets (*dhalootaa*): the generation of the fathers and the generation of the sons. Both are formed within one party. Every party form two such genealogical generations. This principle may also be called the principle of *luba* (not *Luba*) because the formation of the Gadaa genealogical generation of fathers and sons is the formation of two *luba*s. Both generations (*luba*) have distinct roles and responsibilities during a given Gadaa period in the Gadaa System. One Gadaa generation is exactly forty years, and every Oromo has his generational role in the Gadaa System. According to this principle, a son becomes *Luba* (Gadaa) by attaining the sixth Gadaa grade exactly forty years after his father, not necessarily when he

becomes forty years old. If he were born when his ideal "right born" father was thirty-two years old, for example, the son would become the *Luba* in waiting (*Raaba Doorii/Raaba Gadaa*) at the age of forty-eight and takes power, if elected *Abbaa Gadaa*, at the age of fifty-two in a four-year staggered succession. This is because his father would become *Raaba Doorii* eight years later, and the son would have to wait for forty years since then to become *Raaba Doorii* exactly forty years after his father.

2.3.24. Principle of gadaa-grades (*Miseensa*)

To ensure the generational roles, Gadaa System has constituted the Gadaa-grades (*miseensa*). There are eleven chronological Gadaa-grades: *Dabballee, Ittimakoo, Qondaala, Kuusa, Raaba, Luba, Yuba I, Yuba II, Yuba III, Yuba IV,* and *Gadamoojjii* (for detailed explanations, see section 1.3). Each grade has a period of eight years, except Raaba and Yuba I in staggered succession. Membership to the Gadaa-grade is not necessarily based on age. However, it is necessarily based on the genealogical generation. Children belong to the same party that corresponds to that of their fathers. If a father belongs to the generation that has just become *Abbaa Gadaa* of *Malbaa* by reaching the *Luba* grade (the sixth grade), for example, his just born child would belong to the next generation of the same party, *Harmuufaa*. He would progress through the grades as a member *(miseensa*), as did his father, transitioning from lower grade to the next higher grade every eight years, except in *Raaba* and *Yuba I* grades that are affected by staggered succession, oftentimes accompanied by elaborate rituals and ceremonies.

2.3.25. Principle of age-sets (*Hiriyaa*)

Gadaa System has structured the Oromo nation into eleven strict age-sets (*hiriyaa*) based on biological age. Every age-set is exactly eight years except the last one, which could be from eighty years to death. Each age-set has a name. All Oromo progressively pass through these age-sets. By constituting strict age-sets, the Gadaa System ensures the uniformity and progression of age-based life activity (education, passage rites, marriage, retirement, etc.), household and public responsibilities, age-mate social relations and friendship, and military training and campaigns.

2.3.26. Principle of norms of assembly sessions *(Naamusa)*

Gadaa System has strict propriety and norms of the *Caffee* assembly that have cultured the Oromo political discourses. This is because of the Principle of *Yaa'ii*. Due to the impact of this principle, the Oromo have high reverence to their *Caffee* and all other public assemblies. They have strict restraint during the deliberations in assembly sessions. They have issued laws (*seera yaa'ii*) that govern the behavior of the participants. The *Caffee* assembly debates and discusses issues of local, regional, and national importance only in good-tempered, considerate, articulate, sensitive, farsighted, matured, and mannered way. The debates follow higher standards that could only be found in debates of modern topnotch scholarly conferences. Participants are guided by philosophical and logical reasoning where assumptions and facts are clearly articulated into categories of *ilaamee* and *ilaa* respectively. To state facts and universally accepted truth, they begin with saying *ilaa*. Such beginning informs the listeners that the speaker is going to state facts and truth as background for his proposition so that the listeners would know and check the facts so. When stating propositions, premises, and inferences, the speaker usually starts by saying *ilaamee*. It informs the listeners that the speaker is not affirming facts, but he was making a logical proposition that may be challenged. Thus, the listener could be able to make an instant assessment to accept or to reject the *ilaamee*. Because all the *Abbaa Gadaa* and the *hayyuu* are sharp in arguments, competent in higher comprehension of the laws, culture, customs, and are skilled orators, fallacious argument would not pass the scrutiny and the critics; and no laws and decisions are passed without thorough consideration of every possible option and alternative as per the law of the assembly meetings. In the assemblies, no cheap talks, clever talks, and deceptions are allowed but intelligence, magniloquence, and great depth and width of thoughts on the issues being discussed are encouraged. Spontaneous interruptions are not allowed: the person who is allowed by the Chairperson (the speaker) has the right to explain his point until he finishes. Attentive listening and deep reflections are encouraged. Also, high scholarly and philosophical persuasion is upheld. The assembly leaders exercise great leadership not only in maintaining the discipline and the norm of the political and legislative debate but also in capturing the moment of consensus and in forwarding articulated decision proposals for unanimous adoption of

decisions or laws. The Oromo assembly is, participatory, disciplined, decidedly rational and persuasive in its process, and efficient, effective, and just in its results because the Gadaa System has constituted standard norms of deliberations that every participant must adhere to.

2.3.27. Principle of representation (*Bakkabuusa*)

The Oromo are described as "community in council" (Legesse, 2006). This, however, does not necessarily mean that every member of the community takes part physically in every meeting. Representation in assemblies is part of the fundamental nature of the Gadaa democracy. The principle of representation (*bakkabuusa*) has been at work in Gadaa democracy. There is a system of bottom-up political representation based on an election in Oromo polity. James Bruce witnessed one such elective representation in the 18th century where "those fixed upon by many votes go as delegates" (Bruce, 1791, pp. 403) to attend the *Caffee* assembly. This illustrates that the Gadaa System has constituted the universal principle of political representation of citizens at various levels of Oromo assemblies. The representation stretches up the whole Gadaa structure from Village Assembly to the National (pan-Oromo) Assembly. Before every higher assembly takes place, the Oromo make decisions on who would represent them in those assemblies. At the grass-root level, which may be a family or village of extended families (*Warra*), every person who has the right to partake takes part in the local meetings. Here, they discuss issues that would be taken to higher meetings/assembly and set a clear agenda. They also choose a person or a group of persons who shall stand for them. If they choose a group of persons, they will affirm their leader directly or indirectly. These representatives stand for the village at the district assembly. The district assembly discusses and debates the collection of agendas for weeks and makes fully binding decisions in consensus within the competence of the assembly. For issues that would require the attention of a higher assembly, the representatives would formulate clear agenda, and assign advocates or spokespersons for them from among themselves. The next higher assembly is the *Gumii* of two junior dual moieties (for example *Sabbo* and *Gonna* of *Boorana*) or a Regional *Caffee* (for example Assembly of *Maccaa*). The next higher assembly would be the assembly of the Confederation of *Booranaa* or *Baarentuu*. The highest assembly would be the pan-Oromo assembly, the

confederation of *Booranaa* and *Baarentuu* (see the discussion under section 3.3.). Higher assemblies above junior dual moiety assembly or regional assembly have become unmanageable since the second half of the 16th century. Only the lower Gadaa assemblies which were in the periphery to the political center in Addis Ababa (*Finfinnee*) could survive since the late 19th century. Nonetheless, the principle of representation has been part of the Gadaa constitution.

2.3.28. Principle of flag (*Alaabaa*)

Gadaa System has constituted a trio colored flag as the state flag of the Oromo nation and the Gadaa government. The colors are black on top, red in the middle, and white at the bottom. The colors of the flag of the Gadaa System have profound meanings. Black stands for *Waaqa* (God). It is the color of *Waaqa*. The Oromo believe *Waaqa* is black. Red stands for an active life. It is the color of blood. The Oromo believe that blood is life. Blood represents every human and animal activity. White stands for death. It is the color of bone. It represents retiring from active life, death. Similarly, a read-only flag and banner and a black only flag and banner are constituted for political and religious activities, respectively. On occasions of Gadaa and *Qaalluu* public events, the Oromo fly the mono-color red or black flags, respectively. These monocular flags are known as *faajjii*. They serve to distinguish the two camps during joint public ceremonies.

2.3.29. Principle of Ethnological Integration (*Moggaasaa*)

The Oromo have been a receptive society to any minority group or nationalities who wanted to join them and wanted to become one of them. In case such a group wanted to join the Oromo nation, it could become so by becoming the "brothers" of one of the contiguous Oromo clans. This is made possible by the innovative ethnographical integration system of the Oromo nation, known as *moggaasaa*.

Gadaa System constituted *moggaasaa* as a social integration system by constituting that every non-Oromo can become an Oromo ethnographically

by voluntarily seeking social and ethnographical integration with the Oromo. Gadaa System made laws through which the transformation of non-Oromo to Oromo must be guided and the necessary social transformation rituals that must be conducted. Once the official ritual of *moggaasaa* is completed according to the law, the alien minority society or nationality becomes part of the Oromo nation at once in every aspect. For example, if the minority Harari people of *Harargee* are adopted according to *moggaasaa* by the *Ituu*, they would become part and parcel of *Ituu* Oromo and take the kinship relationship of the *Ituu* Oromo vis-à-vis the Oromo nation: their identity as Harari would cease.

The principle of *Moggaasaa* introduced the non-genetic genealogy into the Oromo nation. Historically the practice of *moggaasaa* has integrated some minority groups to the Oromo nation ethnographically during the 16th century who, since then, have become intractable and indistinguishably Oromo.

2.3.30. Principle of adoption (*Guddifachaa*)

The Oromo nation also has another form of ethnographical social integration for individuals, at least starting from as early as the 16th century (when it was recorded first in Abyssinian history). It is known as *guddifachaa* (the forerunner of modern adoption). They have made a law by which private individuals (an adult or a child) may become an Oromo.

Through the institution of *guddifachaa* and its corresponding law, any able Oromo may adopt an alien person. The alien person who is adopted through *guddifachaa* becomes an Oromo in every social, legal, and ethnographical aspect. He automatically takes an Oromo genealogy. A notable example of this practice in the 16th century, though failed terribly when the adoptee chooses to be a king) was the adoption of an Abyssinian prince, who later became *Atse* Susenyos, by a man of *Boorana* Oromo by the name Bokku around 1565 (Delebo, 1982 Eth. C.).

2.2.31. Principle of normalization by birth (*Dhalataa*)

Gadaa democracy also constituted the integration of the *kooluu* into the Oromo kinship and clan structures after they had been given *meedhachaa*. This, however, may take time. Among the *Maccaa* Oromo, the *kooluu* become *dhalataa* according to this principle. The common name *dhalataa*, among *Maccaa* Oromo, refers to those families, minority societies, and clans who have been given *kooluu* and *meedhachaa* and have lived among the Oromo, and as a result, have decided to become part of the Oromo society permanently. They are referred to as *dhalataa* (descent child) probably because it is the new generation of the *kooluu* that would integrate fully into the Oromo society by becoming a member of the party of the Gadaa in power during their birth. This is because their fathers had no party. After all, they were not Oromo. They would progress through the Gadaa-grades and age-sets starting from there.

Unlike in the case of *moggaasaa* where the alien minority society instantly becomes a "junior" Oromo in the social structure and acquires full rights and privileges like the Oromo, the *dhalataa* maintain their kinship relationship and do not necessarily become ethnologically Oromo. Because of not being so, they have limited rights in the Gadaa System and other religious, cultural, economic, and social roles. In rare cases, they may simply adopt the Gadaa System and its institution for themselves as an integral part of the Oromo nation or as confederate. If so, they may also decide to leave the Oromo and join another society as they did join *Atse* Susenyos of Abyssinia in the early 17th century divulging the *Maccaa* Oromo.

2.3.32. Principle of asylum (*Kooluu*)

This is the principle of asylum. The Gadaa System has constituted the principle of asylum. Wandering beleaguered minority communities and families who arrive in the Oromo country announce their arrival to the leader (*hayyuu gosaa*) of the local senior Oromo kinship structure in the area before they settle. If they settled without announcement, i.e., without applying for asylum, and have shown no intention to do so, they could be evicted forcefully and perhaps violently by *Abbaa Duulaas* and *Abbaa Gadaas* (Gidada,

2016). If the immigrants have a genuine reason to take refuge in the Oromo country, the host (senior family (*warra*), lineage (*qomoo*), clan, etc.) would accept them and allow them to settle in the territory under its control. So long as any such immigrants are under unpretentious threat from an enemy, natural calamity, or life-threatening socio-economic and politico-cultural situations, their constitution binds the Oromo to accept them into their country. Being accepted and allowed to settle in the Oromo country is the first step towards the gradual integration of the aliens into the Oromo society.

2.3.33. Principle of protection (*Meedhacha*)

Gadaa Democracy has constituted that those newly immigrated people who had settled in the Oromo country according to *kooluu* have the protection of the Oromo for their safety. This is the second step towards their gradual integration into the Oromo society. The Oromo host who has accepted them and has allowed them to settle in the Oromo country gives them a guarantee of protection in a ceremony known as *meedhachaa*. In this ceremony, the *kooluu* formally receive the symbol of protection from their protectors. The symbol is *meedhachaa*. It is a piece of skin cut in the shape of a wristlet from limbs of the ceremonially slaughtered animal and worn on the wrist. Once the *kooluu* have received *meedhachaa*, it would be known that they are under the full protection of the Oromo nation. They, however, do not have equal political rights in the Gadaa System with the Oromo, just yet. They are not yet sovereign as the Oromo by becoming integrated into the Gadaa System.

2.3.34. Principle of holistic peace (*Nagaa*)

Nagaa is the primary principle and the aim of the Gadaa System. It is the focal point of all other Gadaa principles. Among the Oromo, the principle of *nagaa* is understood lightly as *nagaa Oromoo* (peace of Oromo). As such, it is the universal principle that sanctions violence among the Oromo at all levels (Bulcha, 1996).

It, however, is a principle that encompasses much more than avoidance of violence among the Oromo. The concept of *nagaa* of the Oromo is not limited to ordinary peace and the Oromo only; it includes social harmony,

cooperation, non-violence among humankind, and even extends to the maintenance of natural ecosystem in a way that may be conceived partly by the modern concept of maintenance of human ecology. As such, it partly overlaps with the concept of *safuu*. The Oromo have *nagaa* only when the human-animal ecology is in peace, i.e., holistic peace is achieved. Thus, *nagaa* is equivalent to *holistic* peace. As a holistic peace, *nagaa* implies none disturbance of the natural and man-made equipoises, absence of any violence and man-made or natural disasters, the prevalence of calm, security, stability, and harmonious social relations both among the Oromo and between the Oromo and other peoples.

Gadaa has constituted the maintenance of *nagaa Oromoo*. The Oromo commemorate this in their ritualistic prayers that precede every public event (see Principle of Prayer). The leader of any Oromo prayer asks, 'Is the *Waaqa* in peace?' 'Is the earth in peace?' 'Are the rivers in peace?' 'Are the lakes in peace?' 'Are the mountains in peace?' 'Are the forests in peace?' 'Is the country in peace?' 'Are the Oromo in peace?' 'Are the animals in peace?' 'Is Gadaa in peace?' 'Is the government in peace?' … Depending on the structure and level of the public event or the prayer itself, the questions continue until the last constituent element of the *nagaa* is reached. The public responds affirmatively by saying, "*Nagaa!*" rhythmically after every question, if so.

2.3.35. Principle of "Oromo Dream" (*Kaawoo*)

Kaawoo is a lifetime goal. It is the ultimate dignity. It is a measure of what an Oromo should strive to achieve during one's lifetime. Its goal is to ensure the holistic well-being of the Oromo. It requires every Oromo to have a goal in life and to strive for holistic peace, security, and prosperity. As such, it may be considered as an Oromo Dream. It is also considered as a national and an individual goal of the Oromo. Gadaa System required every Oromo to strive for peace all the time and ensure *nagaa* Oromo to achieve ultimate personal and national pride as a lifetime goal. It sets personal and national *kaawoo* (also *kaa'oo*) for the Oromo. In doing so, the Gadaa System constituted national and personal visions for the Oromo. *Kaawoo* has been instrumental in garnering the solidarity and unit of the Oromo. Having such a *kaawoo* played a historic role during the 16th century successive offensive-defensive campaigns of the Oromo against the aggressively expanding

Christian Abyssinian kingdom from north to south and the passively mushrooming Muslim principalities along the main trade routes from northeast to the center of the Oromo country. The *kaawoo* of the Oromo nation has been elusive since the decline of the Gadaa System and their forceful incorporation into modern Ethiopia and other Horn of African countries in the second half of the 19th century. Yet, the Oromo have kept on dreaming the "Oromo Dream."

2.3.36. Principle of development policy (*Finna*)

Finna is the Oromo concept of socio-economic development that has been constituted to guide the Gadaa government. *Finna* implies a comprehensive and overall progressive development expressed in biological exposition in ascending order as *Guddina, Gabbina, Bal'ina, Badhaadhina, Hormaata, Dagaaga,* and *Dagaa-Hora* (Verharen, 2013; Jalata, 2005). They may be rendered as growth, augmentation, opening out, prosperity, abundance, excess, and wealth accumulation, respectively. As such, these *finna* expositions have guided the Gadaa government of the Oromo over centuries.

Because of the pervasiveness of this principle, it would be necessary to quote Asafa Jalata extensively. Based on the works of Aneesa Kassam and Gamachu Megerssa, Jalata (1996) explains:

> The Oromo have a very complex theory that explained phases and features of development in the Oromo society; the Oromo concept of development is called finna in southern Oromia (Kassam, forthcoming; Megerssa, 1993a). Finna embodies the cumulative historical and contemporary social changes that take place to produce a new social order. According to Kassam (forthcoming), finna "represents the legacy of the past which each generation inherits from its forefathers and which it transforms; it is the fertile patrimony held in trust by the present generation which it will enrich and bequeath to future generations . . . it describes a movement emanating from the inside, a developing of the inner potential of society based on the cultural roots it has already laid down." (p. 112)

Gadaa governments set one of these *finna* as their goal, oftentimes in progression. Once set, the *finna* becomes the socio-economic ethos and the

political motto of the Gadaa government. In the 16th century, the Oromo must have progressed through these expositions. In the last century, the maxim, *Gadaan Gabbina!* 'Gadaa is (of) augmentation!' had been quite common, and successive Gadaa governments could not set any better goal. As the practice of Gadaa System has been reviving across Oromia and beyond since the beginning of the 21st century and it has now become intangible world heritage, the present Gadaa governments might aptly set their goals a little higher, perhaps *Gadaan Bal'ina* (Gadaa of opening out; expansion). The goal of any Gadaa government would be *Dagaag-hora,* Gadaa of riches, and excesses.

The Gadaa System has constituted the very concept of *finna* and the requirement of defining the Gadaa government with one of its variants. Once defined, it serves as not only the motioning guide of the government and the vision of its leaders and but also as the developmental aphorism of the Oromo nation.

2.3.37. Principle of harmonious balances (*Safuu*)

Gadaa Democracy has constituted the principle of *safuu*, maintenance of harmonic balance. The principle of *safuu* requires the Oromo to respect, uphold, and preserve the harmonic equilibriums between and among all that is around them, that are known to them, and that are believed to exist in their universe. The Oromo believe that doing so preserves the balance of the universe. This balance includes harmony between the creator and the creation, harmony between people, between people and animals, between people and the environment, maintaining the harmony of the natural ecosystem, and harmony between and among everything that exists in the universe. The Oromo people also believe that if the harmonic balance that naturally exists is disrupted, it would gradually become dangerous for every life. They also believe that not respecting *safuu* (failing to uphold the natural harmonic balance) has a direct consequence on the *nagaa* (holistic peace) and *kaawoo* (envisioned individual and national dream) of the Oromo. According to the Oromo belief system, *Waaqa* does not destroy anything but the action/inaction of humans does. One such action/inaction of humans is manifested in respecting/maintaining *safuu*. Respecting *safuu* is not limited to people only. *Safuu* is constituted in Gadaa System in such a way that the Oromo not only respect/maintain *safuu*; they actively expect others, including

Waaqa and *ayyaanaa*, to do so, and all for their self-interest of avoiding physical and non-physical catastrophes by disturbing the natural equilibrium on the earth and in the universe.

2.3.38. Principle of dual moiety (*Lammii*)

The Oromo maintain social balance both at the national, regional, and local levels through the dual moiety system. Hence, they are organized in moieties, two equal, complementary, and balanced halves at all levels. The *Qaalluu*, the ritual leaders, head the moieties. The historical two halves of the Oromo nation, i.e., national moieties, are the *Baarentuu* (also known as *Baarettumma*) and the *Booranaa*. One of the two halves of the moieties is designated "senior," the other "junior," so do their respective *Qaalluus*. "Seniority" entitles precedence to ritual leadership and blessing.

Such hierarchal replication has enabled the Oromo to maintain a pyramidal social structure and help balance the social makeup and the membership to the *Qaalluu* institutions. Legesse (2006) suggests that the moieties are replicated in regional moieties and their respective sub-moieties. He suggests that replication and/or rebuilding of moieties of the Oromo societies are from *Booranaa-Baarentuu (Baarettumma)* to the respective *Salgan Booranaa-Torban Baarentuu* of *Tuulama* in central Ethiopia (Oromia); *Irdiidaa-Baarettuma* of *Orma* in Kenya; *Booranaa-Gabbaro* of *Maccaa* in southwest Ethiopia (west Oromia); *Anniya-Qalloo* of *Baarentu* in east Ethiopia (Oromia); *Gonna-Sabbo* of *Boorana* in southern Ethiopia and Northern Kenya; and *Siiqqoo-Mandoo* of *Arsii* in central Ethiopia (Oromia) (Legesse, 2006, *Fig.* 4.1). According to Jalata (2012), *Raayyaa-Asaboo* in northern Ethiopia is another replication of the respective ancient Oromo moieties. Gadaa System has constituted this balanced pyramidal social stratification, the basis of which is the dual moiety system, and non-territorial, counterpoised, and competitive socio-political stratification.

Perhaps, Gadaa System has also constituted the extrapolation of the descents of the moieties during the expansion of the Oromo nation in the Horn of Africa region during the 15th–18th centuries. Future research may reveal the reason the descents of the two ancient moieties have settled, as they are manifest today. Until then, one can only guess that there was a principle of settlement that required orderly settlements each composed of balanced descents of the two ancient moieties.

2.3.39. Principle of periphery (*Moggaa*)

Moggaa is borderland represented by the outmost community, *Moggaa*. Before the principle of demarcation of borders emerged in political thinking, the Oromo appear to have relied on the principle of *Moggaa* to have a sense of the extent of their jurisdiction. Understanding the vulnerability of these communities, Gadaa System has constituted special protection for these frontier communities and expansion of the Oromo land along with those frontiers. The principle dictates that any attack on the *Moggaa* is an attack on the whole polity. The principle also dictates that the Oromo community always expands its *Moggaa* after every generation. This is because, except for the firstborn son, all other sons must find new land to proper to themselves and their future family outside of the present family holdings.

2.3.40. Principle of harmonious reciprocity (*Wal-dandeettii*)

Wal-dandeettii is resultant to the joint effects of adaptation, toleration, mutuality, and peaceful coexistence. Because of the lack of its single equivalence in the English language, the phrase 'harmonious reciprocity' may suffice. It is the principle of social engagement of the Oromo with other peaceful peoples. The principle requires the Oromo to be peaceful and friendly toward alien peoples whenever they come in peace and accommodate them as they would welcome a brother. In the Oromo sociological and religious thinking, all human beings are distant siblings and all faiths are derivatives of belief in *Waaqa*.

As a result of the combined effects of their socio-religious thinking and the Principle of *Wal-dandeettii*, the Oromo treat alien peoples "not only as equals but also as brothers and sisters" (Dawo, 2013, pp. 166, 167); they do not intend to benefit at the expense of others (Levine, 2007) nor do they suspect other could try to benefit at their expense; they do not characterize human differences as superior or inferior; their culture and values are inherently tolerant, peaceful, and synchronous (Bassi 1965 cited in Dawo, 2013); they always found it difficult to define other peoples as enemy nor do they go to war easily as they always give peaceful options priority. Concisely, the Oromo are tolerant and accommodating as the earth.

Nevertheless, there have been times in history when this principle exposed the Oromo to daring victimization. During the Medieval period, their principle of *Wal-dandeettii* proved to be injurious especially in the region that has now become central Ethiopia. Expansionist Christian Kingdom of Abyssinia and Muslim sultanates and imamates debased them from their ancestral land for centuries and threatened the very socio-political system that accommodated them for long until the Oromo had to respond decisively. The same principle victimized the frontier Oromo communities in the immediate south of Abyssinia Proper during the early 17th century and in the mid-19th century. Also, the effect of the same principle has continued to victimize the Oromo in their relationship with the Amhara, Tigre, Somlai, Gedeo, Sidama, Hadiyya, Kaffino, Gumz, Gammo, Guragie, Afar, and Segen peoples in modern Ethiopia. Since the end of the 19th century, Oromia has become the relocation hub for other peoples because of the influence of their deep-rooted Principle of *Wal-dandeettii*, where the Oromo are offering by far a lot more than they could receive in reciprocity. The Oromo have been disadvantaged due to the Principle of *Wal-dandeettii* that has been constituted by the Gadaa System and has now become an instinctive nature of the Oromo people to which the expected harmonious reciprocity has always been almost non-existent, including from the successive government in modern Ethiopia.

2.3.41. Principle of ritual feast (*Buttaa*)

Gadaa System has constituted that every member of the *Luba* grade must offer a ritual feast, known as *Buttaa*, to members of junior Gadaa Grades and the local public. *Buttaa* is a festivity attached to the Gadaa System, particularly to the *Luba* grade, as a marker of a passage rite. The feast involves sacrifices of animals (usually bulls and rams) and preparation of customary exotic food and drinks. The feasts are offered usually twice during the eight-years. In a four-year staggered succession, the first takes place when the *Raaba* transition to *Raaba Doorii*. The second takes place four years later during power transfer season when the *Raaba Doorii* become *Luba*. *Buttaa* celebrants may choose to offer the feast at one of the occasions depending on their means. Those who can afford and want their name and fame to travel widely across the country can offer the feast throughout the four years. The basic rule that applies to the *foollee* (a band of touring ritual singers and

dancers) is that it is not allowed to visit the same host twice. Yet, the extravaganza of the *Buttaa* feast bankrupts flamboyant Oromo households every season. The wealth, social and political importance and an ambition to be elected to serve in public offices, aspiration to leave a memorable mark in the society, or being already elected *Abbaa Gadaa* increases the importance of having an extended and rich feast. However, everyone does not need to sacrifice animals. They however must prepare modest cultural and ritual foods and a variety of drinks for the ritual feast. The feasts could also be offered in a group, with contributions, accompanied by elaborate political, cultural, and spiritual rituals. The primary invitees of the feast are the *foollee* (see the discussion under section 1.3.3.1.). The *Luba* host the ritual feast because the Gadaa System has constituted it.

2.3.42. Principle of sovereignty (*Birmadummaa*)

The principle of *Birmadummaa* is a very ubiquitous principle in the of the Oromo. It is the first principle in the Gadaa System. It is the principle of sovereignty. It is the cornerstone of the Gadaa System and the Oromo identity. As it is well known, the very name 'Oromo' is concurrent with sovereignty and freedom. 'Oromo' means 'men,' or 'brave,' or 'brave men,' or 'noble' (Reclus, 1892; 1890). It also means "freemen" (Beke, 1845, p. 96). The Oromo are "a community of free men with equal rights" (Haberland, 1992, p. 718).

This freedom and equal rights are preserved in the concept of sovereignty, which is constituted in the Principle of *Birmadummaa* in the Gadaa System. According to this principle, a household is a sovereign political entity, and hence the basic unit of political authority (Gidada, 2016). Every Oromo household is represented by the head of the household of the family, who is almost always by the husband and very rarely by his widow, in the Gadaa System. By the virtue of the sovereignty of the household, every member of the household is free (*walaba*). Every free Oromo person attains sovereignty when he sets up his family, according to the Gadaa laws, at the end of *Kuusa* grade or around the age of thirty-two. Until then, except in their own age-sets and Gadaa grades, sons are represented by their father or by their widowed *rakoo* mother in Gadaa Assemblies. The sovereignty of the household is manifest by the sovereignty of the head of the household. The sovereignty of the head of the household is encoded symbolically into his

attires. He wears a head turban (*ruufoo*) made of the three colors of the Oromo (black, red, and white) and keeps a decorated whip (*alangaa*) in his hand in public (if he has attained *Luba* grade), and wears *kallachaa* (a phallus-shaped ornament) on his forehead occasionally (if he were elected Abbaa Gadaa) (Gidada, 2016). Also, according to this principle, the Oromo are neither born nor made to any form of bondage. Every Oromo is free, and every Oromo household is sovereign. Furthermore, according to this principle, non-Oromo people may also be made sovereign by laws.

For the Oromo who have attained sovereignty, sovereignty and life become synonymous. One without the other becomes untenable. They would rather die than lose their sovereignty. For instance, they chose their death than being a slave in the late 19th century (Reclus, 1892) during the rampage of slaving in East Africa. An enslaved sovereign Oromo loses his sovereignty instantly.

2.3.43. Principle of pilgrimage (*Muudaa*)

Muudaa is the principle with which the Oromo remind themselves that they have both secular and spiritual leaders who have clearly defined and separate roles and responsibilities. The principle of *Muudaa* requires every third generation of Oromo and representatives of every level of decentralized Gadaa government to attend *Muudaa* (Bulcha, 1996). *Muudaa* is a sacred national ceremony held once every eight years at the residence of the *Abbaa Muudaa*, the strictly hereditary leader of all *Qaalluu* and occupant of the office of *Abbaa Muudaa*. The residence of *Abbaa Muudaa*, a shrine, is the place of pilgrim for the Oromo. It is located at the contemporary cradle land of the Oromo. Pilgrims (*jila*) converge to the residence of *Abbaa Muudaa* for *Muudaa* ceremony. On a *Muudaa* ceremony, the *Abbaa Gadaa* in power and the *Abbaa Muudaa* meet face-to-face. Because of the religious nature of the ceremony, the *Abbaa Muudaa* reserves seniority, and leads the ritual; the *Abbaa Gadaa* becomes an observer. The ceremony is an elaborate ritual that takes days or weeks. On such ceremonies, the *Abbaa Muudaa* not only blesses and anoints the *Abbaa Gadaa* and the *jila* (pilgrims) but also sends a message across the Oromo nation. One example of such a message from around the turn of the 17th century was, "to be righteous, not to recognize any leader who tries to get absolute power, and not to fight among themselves" (Knutson 1967 as cited in Jalata, 2005, p. 35).

In the Gadaa System, all ritual travelers are given the spiritual importance of the holy and the legal status of protected. Every Oromo is expected to care for, protect, and give way to the *jila* to the *Abbaa Muudaa* or the seat of *Abbaa Gadaa*. The same care and protection also apply to the participants of the *yaa'*a and *godaansa* of the Gadaa System. The former is ritual travel to attend Gadaa assembly or Gadaa Council meetings. The latter is a ritual trip as part of passage rights from *Raaba* to *Luba* and *Luba* to *Yuba* grades among some Oromo communities. The holiest of the ritual travels is however, *Muudaa*.

Muudaa is constituted to keep the social, spiritual, political, and national unity of the Oromo nation. It does so through three mechanisms: a sentimental celebration of the contemporary cradle land of the Oromo, paying regular homage to the spiritual leader of the nation and conserving the democratic and peaceful nature of the Gadaa government by reminding the nation about the separation of the spiritual and the political domains. *Muudaa* does all at the same time and on a single but extended august occasion. The office of *Abbaa Muudaa,* as a non-secular, virtually parallel, institution to the office of *Abbaa Gadaa*, is formed because of the principle of *Muudaa*.

2.3.44. Principle of thanksgiving (*Irreechaa*)

Gadaa System has also constituted annual thanksgiving. Members of the Oromo society must offer jointly thanks to the creator God, *Waaqa*, twice a year. This communal thanksgiving takes place at the side of a water body (*Irreecha Malkaa*) and on top of a hill or mountain (*Irreecha Tulluu*). The former marks the end of the rainy season and the beginning of spring. The later marks the end of the dry season and the beginning of the cultivation season, *Arfaasaa*. The former is more communal and more popular than the latter. Like other Oromo ceremonies, the *Irreechaa* ceremony has an elaborate ritual and procession, involving several millions of people at a time. The administration of *Irreechaa* is governed by applicable laws.

Even though *Irreechaa* has a religious element to it and a festival of the *Waaqeffataa*, there is no religious discrimination on the ceremony, no members of other religions are uninvited. Instead, followers of all religions are invited to attend the ceremony and offer thanks to their respective God together with the *Waaqeffataa*. On *the Irreechaa* ceremony, what is most

important is not differences of any sort among the attendants but their unity to offer thanks to the creator of the universe, with whichever name they call Him and whichever image they know Him. The Oromo believe the God of every true monotheistic religion may be different in names and attributes but is one, *Waaqa*.

2.3.45. Principle of *Waaqa* and prayer to *Waaqa* (*Waaqeffannaa*)

The principle of *Waaqa* is a declaration that the Oromo trust in the only One God, *Waaqa*. Belief in *Waaqa* is a monotheistic faith. *Waaqa* is a supreme divinity, the only divinity that has ever existed, and the only divinity that has created the universe and everything in it. *Waaqa* is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, transcendent, omnibenevolent, and pure. *Waaqa* cannot be comprehended fully by human imagination.

In principle, the Gadaa System would not concern itself if an attribute of the God of any organized religion is given to *Waaqa*. The focus is not on theological doctrine but central faith. Whether a *Waaqeffataa*, a Muslim, or a Christian invokes *Waaqa*, for example, does not matter. In the Gadaa System, the fundamental assumption is that all religions, if they have the principle of a religious community, are the worship of One *Waaqa*. However, the Gadaa system favors *Waaqeffannaa*. Followers of *Waaqeffannaa*, Islam, and Christianity often pray to *Waaqa* together in Gadaa ceremonies and conventions as per the established prayer protocol. All follow a similar style of prayer.

Nonetheless, spiritual, and secular domains are demarked clearly in Gadaa System. One has little or no influence on the other. However, the principle of *Waaqa* requires the Gadaa leaders and the Gadaa governments to declare trust in *Waaqa* and pray to *Waaqa*. The maxim is the same as that of USA: "*Nuti Waaqatti bulla*!" meaning, "We trust in *Waaqa*!" Every public gathering of the Oromo, including the *Caffee*, starts and ends with a prayer to *Waaqa*. The prayers (*Waaqa kadhannaa*) are led by a group of *Luba*, *Abbaa Gadaa*, *Qaalluu*, or senior elderly (*Jaarsa biyyaa*) appointed on the spot from any religious denomination. Conventionally, every Oromo starts and ends his everyday activities with a prayer to *Waaqa* and *Waaqa* alone in addition to the

thanksgiving prayer by every Oromo at home every morning and every evening.

Prayer to *Waaqa* is constituted in the Gadaa System. Prayer is the starting and concluding element of every business of the Gadaa System. To the services of these, the Oromo have issued laws of prayer. The name of *Waaqa* is invoked at every notable function of the Gadaa government and all its public rituals.

This principle is also omnipresent in the life of every Oromo. Every Oromo invokes the name of *Waaqa* all the time when he/she begins and ends any endeavor in private or in-group, at home, or in public. No business of the Oromo begins or ends without prayer to *Waaqa* or without invoking the name of *Waaqa*.

2.3.46. Principle of psycho-social reconciliation of homicides (*Gumaa*)

Gumaa is one of the complex concepts of the Oromo nation. It is a psycho-social reconciliation of homicide cases. It is an indispensable institution to manage blood feuds and other forms of potential retribution. The Gadaa System has constituted it as the Principle of *Gumaa*. The principle prohibits redressing homicides by another homicide. It offers an alternative peaceful mechanism to resolve the conflict through an elaborate *Gumaa* ritual. The ritual is governed by the laws. The *Gumaa* system includes restorative justice, family reintegration, rebuilding mutual trust, rehabilitative psychotherapy (Keneni, 2013). The administration of the *Gumaa* System follows the established laws and it could take months. In the end, however, not only justice would be served but also effective psycho-social reconciliation would be administered. This would ensure that there would be no antipathy between the bereaved and the committer of the homicide.

2.3.47. Principle of communal criminal investigation (*Afarsaataa*)

The Oromo conducts criminal investigations communally. Such communal criminal investigations are known as *Afarsaataa*. It is an expedited

gathering of neighborhood or community for criminal investigation. Gadaa constitution requires every Oromo to take part in such communal criminal investigation with utmost honesty and urgency. No member of the neighborhood or community, except minors and incapacitated senior citizens, are excused from *Afarsaataa*. People who have information on the crime being investigated or have witnessed it taking place or were part of it would be encouraged to come out. Everyone would hear the witness testimonies and the confessions. Every able member of the community in community police. The *Raaba* are vested with the special duty of crime prevention and investigation. The local *Raaba* facilitate the investigation of the crime, including tracing and apprehending the perpetrators. However, an experienced *Abbaa Alangaa* (prosecutor) leads the investigation. Everyone at *Afarsaataa* takes an oath upon himself or herself in the name of *Waaqa*, to tell the truth and only the truth. The information gathered in such a way usually leads to the identification of the perpetrator. The criminal would be taken to a judge as per the laws and punished so.

2.3.48. Principle of sacred marriage (*Rakoo*)

The principle of *rakoo* is the law of the first family. The first family is a sacred ritual family in the Gadaa System. The principle of *rakoo* integrates passage rite from *Kuusa* to *Raaba*, *birmadummaa* (sovereignty), *Daannisa*, and 'right birth.' According to this principle, an Oromo man marries his first ritual wife at the transition rite from *Kuusa* to *Raaba* grade according to the laws of *rakoo* (family laws). *Rakoo* marriage is a prerequisite to becoming *Luba*. Marriage ensures the formation of family (setting up a household), which is the basic political unit in the Gadaa System where the head of the household (head of the family) becomes sovereign. Unmarried men cannot become *Luba*; they are not sovereign yet. *Rakoo* wife is chosen carefully but she commands huge respect and privilege in society. Traditionally, men are very observant of their choice of a life partner. The *rakoo* wife is expected to be a virgin. Only she could become *Haadha Siiqqee*. Also, only she could become *Haadha Gadaa* in the unfortunate event of becoming a widow of *Abbaa Gadaa*. And only she could give birth to a right born *Dabballee*.

Marriage is a sanctified marriage, and it is for life: it can never be divorced. Even if the couple could separate or the man could marry another wife, the *rakoo* wife remains his only ritual partner for life. Even though

second marriage is not prohibited in the Gadaa System, the *rakoo* marriage is the only marriage sanctioned by the Gadaa System. A second marriage may be possible if the *rakoo* wife allows it for good reason (infertility, for example) or if either of the couple become widower or widow but not encouraged. It takes place very rarely and it is usually not announced, and no ritual ceremonies are held. Historically, the oldest brother of her deceased husband used to inherit the *rakoo* wife for the safety of the family and protection of property but only if she chose to be inherited.

2.3.49. Principle of women's rights (*Siiqqee*)

Gadaa System has constituted the institution of *Siiqqee* where married women voice their grievances against their ill-treating husbands and on other issues particularly relevant to them. These include social, cultural, economic, ritual, and political. The institution of *Siiqqee* runs almost parallel to the institutions of Gadaa. The principle of *Siiqqee* is fundamentally a principle for the equality of women, particularly the *rakoo* wives, with their men. Thus, *Siiqqee* Institution is an *esprit de corps* institution of Oromo women for a redress of grievances of wives against their husbands. Women of *Siiqqee* form their local assemblies where they discuss issues related to married women. In case a husband mistreats his wife, she would take out her *siiqqee* (ritual stick given to her as a symbol of her independence and reminder of her rights by her mother on the occasion of her marriage to her *rakoo* husband) and walk out. This would trigger the crisis meeting of the *Siiqqee Assembly*, the married women only assembly, against the violation of her natural rights, dignity, freedom, *seera rakoo* (law of first marriage), or other legal rights. There, she would explain her grievances. The Assembly, after looking into the issue thoroughly, may resolve. The Assembly could also request the Gadaa Council to enforce the resolution.

2.3.50. Principle of ecosystem (*Naannoo*)

Gadaa System has constituted the protection of the ecosystem. Accordingly, the Oromo must make use of nature without disturbing the natural balance of the ecosystem. The Oromo believe that nothing is created with no use or purpose: everything around them, animate and inanimate, is

important for the wellbeing of humanity and thus must be protected and used modestly. This has been reflected in the remarkable environmental protection practice by the Oromo. Laws enacted for the Principle of Ecosystem are fully enforced even today among many Oromo communities. The laws are enacted for wet and dry seasons and low land, midland, and highland ecosystems. These laws require the Oromo, for example, not to cut down trees without replacement at any time, not to pollute water sources in any form, not to disturb the ecosystem of forests, and not to kill any she-game, not to kill any ignoble animal unless for self-defense, not to cut down *Odaa* trees and any big trees. The principle, in general, requires the Oromo to lead an ecologically balanced life.

2.4. Summary

This *chapter* discussed briefly the Gadaa Principles, i.e., Gadaa Constitution. Building on the eighteen Gadaa principles that have already been identified by Legesse (2006), the writer was guided by the Oromo maxim on the number of *heera* (constitution) and *seera* (laws) of the Gadaa System to reconstruct the remainder thirty-two principles. Accordingly, the fifty Gadaa principles are summarized alphabetically as follows:

1. Accountability (*qorannaa*)
2. Adoption (*guddifacha*)
3. Age-sets (*Hiriyaa*)
4. An alliance of alternating groups (*walaanaa-qadadduu*)
5. Asylum (*koolun*)
6. Balanced opposition (*gitaa*)
7. Communal criminal investigation (*Afarsaataa*)
8. Complementary role of hereditary and elective leadership (*wal-ukaa*)
9. Covenant (*kakuu*)
10. Development policy (*finna*)
11. Distribution of power across generation and age sets (*qooddata*)
12. Dual moiety (*lammii*)
13. Ecosystem (*naannoo*)
14. Equality (*qixxee*)
15. Ethnological integration (*moggaasaa*)
16. Five parties (*shanan Gadaa*)

17. Flag (*alaabaa*)
18. Functional and spatial separation of powers between Gadaa and *Qaalluu* (*wal-laga*)
19. Gadaa-grades (*miseensa*)
20. Generation-sets (*dhalootaa*)
21. Government by Councils (*yaa'a*)
22. Harmonious balances (*safuu*)
23. Harmonious reciprocity (*wal-dandeettii*)
24. Holistic peace (*nagaa*)
25. Man-made laws (*seera tumaa*)
26. Normalization by birth (*dhalataa*)
27. Norms of assembly sessions (*naamusa*)
28. Orderly succession and limitation of office to a single term (*saddeeta*)
29. Oromo Dream (*kaawoo*)
30. Period of testing: time gap between election and investiture (*gabbisa*)
31. Periphery (*moggaa*)
32. Pilgrimage (*muudaa*)
33. Problem of discontinuity of authority (*cita*)
34. Protection (*meedhacha*)
35. Psycho-social reconciliation of homicides (*gumaa*)
36. Representation (*bakkabuusa*)
37. Ritual feast (*Buttaa*)
38. Sacred marriage (*Rakoo*)
39. Separation of political and ritual domains (*laguu*)
40. Sovereignty (*birmadummaa*)
41. Staggered succession (*Baallii/Bokkuu*)
42. Subordination of warriors to a deliberative assembly (*waraanaa*)
43. Supremacy of the law (*olaantummaa seeraa*)
44. Supreme authority (*Caffee*)
45. Term of office and measurement of time (*dhaha*)
46. Thanksgiving (*Irreechaa*)
47. Unity (*tokkummaa*)
48. Using historic precedents as cautionary or exemplary models (*Daaccii*)
49. *Waaqa* and prayer to *Waaqa* (*Waaqeffannaa*)
50. Women's rights (*Siiqqee*)

The writer would like to acknowledge that these principles (articles of the non-codified constitution of the Gadaa System) are the result of exploratory work. They are not final nor are all of them fully functional or unmodified in their present applications across the localized Oromo polities. The perceptible variations of the principles among Oromo polities offer opportunities for improvements. Scholars and students of the Gadaa System are cordially invited to work toward the reconstruction of a more accurate and final Gadaa Constitution.

Deribie Mekonnen Demmeksa

Chapter 3

Gadaa System: A Republican and Federal System

3.1. Introduction

One of the fundamental principles of a democratic system is guarding the power against usurpers. Historically, monarchs, military officials, interest groups, oligarchs, and religious leaders have usurped state power. Any state power not taken through a democratic election is usurped power. Usurped power is stolen power: it is stolen from the people. It can only be protected through the mechanism of a democratic election.

Before the emergence of classical republican democracy in the Western world in the late 18th century, a republican government, a government where the people not only had asserted their inalienable rights but also had made important decisions and made laws by themselves, had already governed the Oromo nation. The Oromo have governed themselves based on rule of law and by elected political leadership, in a democratic process and extensive political participation, for centuries. According to Abyssinian historical records, they had a full-fledged republican government where leaders were elected and retired every eight years in the early 16th century. This was before the West popularized republican political ideals such as democratic election, liberties, social contract, and universal male suffrage.

Universal male suffrage is an old socio-political concept among the Oromo nation. It is as old as the Gadaa System itself is. In the Gadaa System, every leader, except a spiritual leader, is elected. The elections in Gadaa System, by design, have helped the Oromo nation for many centuries to exercise their democratic right of transferring some of their sovereignty to the leaders that they elect for attaining collective security and the common good. Geshe (2013b) notes, "Gadaa System has a sophisticated election process in which the society gets to elect its representative for a seat at different levels of assemblies of the system including for the post of the *Abbaa Gadaa* [president]" (p. 31). These elections have been practiced throughout the recorded history of the Oromo.

Gadaa System is an ancient Oromo republican political system that employs a democratic election system. The written Abyssinian record of these elections comes from the 1590s record of *Abba* Bahrey. However, Gadaa related elections have been reported in Arabic sources since 851 CE in the form of *Buttaa* ceremonies (Ayana, 2016). In addition, Gemetchu Megerssa's study has suggested that the practice of the Gadaa election goes as far as 1000 BCE (Lata, 1998). Gadaa and election are inseparable. Gadaa is believed to be over three millennia old (Bokku, 2011). There is no doubt that the election of leaders among the Oromo is as old as the Gadaa System itself.

The concept of liberty is one of the foundations of the Gadaa System. Gadaa System is instituted with the profound assumption that every male head of a household or who has attained the political age of maturity is sovereign and hence has full liberty under the Gadaa constitution. In the Oromo language, the concept is represented by three interrelated and interconnected political concepts: *mirgooma* (liberty), *birmadummaa* (sovereignty), *walabummaa* (freedom), and *bilisummaa* (liberation).

In the Gadaa System, the political ideas of social contract and rights are also interrelated. A form of social contract forms Gadaa System: the people willfully transferred part of their liberties and rights temporarily to the institutions of the System and the discretion of the elected leaders. In doing so, they maintained the liberty to take them back at any time when the transfer is not serving the common good. Yet, they have made sure that their inalienable rights would not be violated under any circumstances. To do so, they have always kept the ultimate power to make laws and to revoke the political contract at any time. This is the essence of the Gadaa System.

Gadaa System is a comprehensive indigenous African system. It is invented by the Oromo nation of East Africa. It is a republican socio-political system that employs democratic practices in age compartmentalization of the Oromo society. It "regulate[s] [p]olitical stability, economic development, social activities, cultural obligations, moral responsibility, and the philosophy of religious order of the society" (Hinew, 2012, p. 105). It is based on the rule of law and an advanced and complex democratic practice that has been governing the Oromo nation effectively at least since the 15th century and at most since prehistory.

This effectiveness was clear nowhere than in the Oromo traditional national defense structure and military leadership. It was the reason why the Oromo were able to defend and reclaim a large part of their Father Land from the expansionist Christian kingdom of Abyssinia and Islamic principalities and sultanates, including the mighty Sultanate of Adal, and the intrusive Omotic peoples and kingdoms during the 16th century. It was due to its effective and efficient defense organization and Gadaa leadership that the Oromo succeeded in reclaiming the territory that they had lost during the 16th to 17th centuries. It was also partly due to the same factor that the minority northern Oromo communities later, from the mid-18th to mid-19th century, dominated the Abyssinian kingdom from the palace at Gondar city for close to one century.

As a democratic system of government, the Gadaa System has imbued democratic values, democratic practices, freedoms, democratic rights, and self-rule in its non-codified constitution. Baissa (2004) enumerates summaries of what the Gadaa System, as a form of democracy, has provided for Oromo over many centuries, during its full practice and the last century of its limited and regionalized practice. According to Baissa (2004, p. 118), Gadaa democracy has provided the Oromo with the following:

1. institutions for self-rule at central and local levels,
2. the right and the mechanism to take part in public affairs,
3. the enjoyment of basic rights and liberties including freedom of speech, the right to own private property, and the right to debate public issues freely and reach compromise solutions,
4. the procedures for election and peaceful change of leaders every eight years,

5. accountability of leaders and the right of recall of those who fail in their responsibilities,
6. the concept of supremacy of the rule of law,
7. balanced representation of clans, lineages, and groups in Gadaa offices,
8. the right to make and obey their own laws and regulations through their own elected officials,
9. the settlement of disputes according to the law through neutral and impartial judges,
10. the concept of pluralism in taking part in politics through the five *missensa* [*gogeessa*] or parties,
11. the concept of *nagaa* and *araraa* [*araaraa*] (peace and reconciliation) for solving conflicts instead of resorting to force,
12. the concept of popular sovereignty where periodically the general assembly decided the most critical issues affecting the people.

The "democratic practices" and "pervasive attitudes" that are consistently found throughout Oromia, according to Holcomb (2004) are (1) local consociation based decision making; (2) respect for collective agreement; (3) extensive discussion of the application of law; (4) delegation of group tasks to able members; (5) the view that public responsibility is a sacred trust and answer-ability of the representatives to that public; (6) subordination of individual differences to group's objectives; and, (7) belief in the free expression of ideas and taking explicit social measures to protect the right of an individual to express his or her opinion or belief in private or in public.

What the Oromo had achieved as advanced political ideals (liberty, freedom, the sovereignty of the people, the supremacy of the rule of law, etc.) and democratic practices (constitutionalism, representation, election, limited government, separation of state powers, limited terms of office, peaceful power transfer, multi-headed government, vertical and horizontal distribution of powers, etc.) in the early 16th century, most of the nations around the world in this 21st century have not yet achieved.

This *chapter* shall discuss the Gadaa System as an invention of the Oromo nation. It shall touch upon the complex concepts of Gadaa and its unsettled definition, the democratic and the law-making culture of the

Oromo nation and its unique democratic foundations, how the Gadaa System excels Western democracy in some respects, and few minor limitations of the Gadaa System.

3.2. Gadaa System, an Invention of the Oromo

Scholars believe that the advent of agriculture in northeast Africa during the era commonly known as the Neolithic revolution (8000–5000 BCE) resulted in a population explosion. Further advancements in agriculture resulted in the establishment of communal settlements and mass production of food. This, in turn, required the establishment of advanced social orders among the people. As the population continued to grow and the existed social order became overwhelmed, there emerged a need to innovate continually better social orders and socio-political institutions. In this process, the consequent population growth between 3500 and 1000 BCE resulted in a rapid change of social and political institutions around the ancient world ushering the earliest human civilizations.

The change in the social and political institutions in the northeast Africa region was, however, believed to be slightly different. Here, the demographic increase led to the age-set system of social cohesion unlike the formation of states in Asia, for example. Before the second millennium BCE, the eastern Cushitic language-speaking peoples who inhabit the region had developed an eight-year initiation cycle (Ehret, 2000, as cited in Hinew, 2012). The institutionalization of the eight-year cycle of initiation may have resulted in the formation of generational sets, where the fathers and the sons ultimately found themselves not only in two separate generations but also in mirroring age sets. These age-set and generation-sets are believed to have become the new form of social and political institutions.

The Oromo, one of the Eastern Cushitic language-speaking peoples, the main stock of population in the Horn of Africa, may have gradually developed the age-sets system further into a higher level of sophistication (Legesse, 2006). On the other hand, it appears more likely that the Oromo introduced the age-sets later in the 15th century as an effective mechanism for military organization and training after the effective use of generation-sets for many centuries. Either way, the Oromo had achieved social advances before the Common Era.

This sophistication included the advances that the Oromo have achieved in socio-political inventions and Astro-cultural advancements. These inventions and advancements that have formed the foundations of the Oromo worldview include but not are limited to *aadaa*, *safuu*, and *dhaha* (time reckoning). The last is asserted by archaeo-astronomic research that has recently shown the astronomic calendar of the Oromo Gadaa culture goes back to at least the second millennium BCE (Hinew, 2012).

The Oromo of Ethiopia and Kenya have an indigenous democratic governance system that is founded on "Oromo institutions of *aadaa* (custom and tradition), *seera* (laws), *safuu* (the Oromo concept of ethics) and *heera* (justice)" (Geshe, 2013a, pp. 64–65). They were led by principles that are found in the modern polity; among them is the principle of equality (Geshe, 2013a). It is important to bear in mind that *safuu* is, in fact, more than just a concept of ethics. It is a blanket concept for ethics, morals, virtue, universal harmony, and a utopian world where everything and every being (including the Supreme Being) mutually respects all the natural laws and man-made just laws that govern everything in the universe. Baba (2015) argues that it is "an epistemological notion" and it is "a proper *understanding* and *interpretation* of one's state of 'existence'" [emphasis in the original] (Part II).

The ideological foundation of the Oromo democratic governance system includes equality of humankind (*qixxummaa*), freedom (*walabummaa*), unity (*tokkummaa*), total peace (*nagummaa*), Oromo identity (*Oromummaa*), total egalitarianism (*wal-qixxummaa*), and peaceful co-existence (*wal-dandeettii*). This indigenous governance system is known as the Gadaa System or simply as Gadaa.

The notion of "Gadaa" is deep-rooted in the Oromo language, thought, and identity in a way an outsider cannot readily understand it. It has interrelated and overlapping meanings and references. The fact that the term Gadaa appeals to and defines crosscutting concepts of politics, culture, and social institutions makes it more complex. By 'Gadaa' the Oromo means so many things based on contexts, inferences, and references. In Oromo language, it is the most meaning overloaded word – narrow and broad, literal, and composite, deep, and shallow, and overarching and precise. It takes a center stage in Oromo thought processes and forms an integral part of their identity.

Gadaa System is a uniquely Oromo system. It originated from the Oromo worldview, philosophy, rationalism, and the combination of their

progressive life experiences. It is one of the inventions of the Oromo. The idea of Gadaa represents being an Oromo (Lewis as cited in Mole 2014). It has become the core element of *Oromummaa* (Oromo identity). But it is not just one element; it is a distinctive set of institutions. As such, it is "highly endowed with legal and moral values" (Hinew, 2012, p. 105). It stands as a statement of egalitarian and democratic political ideology and socio-cultural values in contrast to the hierarchical and autocratic government system.

3.3. Structure of the Gadaa System

To understand the practical workings of the Gadaa System, it is necessary to have the overall picture of its structure and its horizontal and vertical institutions. This section discusses the main elements of the structure of the Gadaa System, albeit in brief. The emphasis, however, shall be on the local assemblies and governments, which together form the pan-Oromo national assembly and government.

However, it is important to introduce the vertical and horizontal institutions of the Gadaa System first. Vertical institutions are the sub-moiety-based institutions or elections that occur within each of the dual moiety structures separately without crossing to each other. Horizontal institutions are non-moiety-based or crosscutting institutions or elections that occur throughout the polity. The former includes the *Qaalluu* institution, the *gosa* institution, the election of *hayyuu Gosaa* and its Council, the election of *hayyuu Meddhichaa* (Lateral Council /shadow government), and the election of *Jaarsa Biyyaa* and its council, Council of Elders. The latter include the institutions of the age-sets, the Gadaa-grades, generation-sets, and their respective Councils, the election of *hayyuu Aduulaa* and *hayyuu Garbaa* and their respective Councils, the executives (*Abbaa Gadaa, Bokkuu/Irreessaa, Abbaa Sa'aa, Abbaa Alangaa, Abbaa Seeraa*, etc.), and their respective elections and appointments. The former are parallel institutions along with the dual moiety; hence they are duplicates. The latter crosscut the dual moiety, thus they are singular.

Nonetheless, the vertical and horizontal institutions are united under a single overarching institution. As the *Qaalluus* of the two moieties unite under the *Abbaa Muudaa* at the national level, the *Abbaa Duulaas* unite under the Gadaa Council. More than two *Abbaa Duulaas* may also unite under one

that they choose from among themselves. The *Garbaa* and *Meddhichaa* Councils are united under the *Aduulaa* Council. Similarly, the *hayyuu hiriyaa, hayyuu gosa, jaarsa biyyaa,* the executives of the Gadaa government are united under the Gadaa Council. All Gadaa institutions and Councils are united under the *Caffee*, the legislative assembly. The succeeding sections shall discuss these institutions in detail.

3.3.1. Legislative Assemblies

The Oromo are a nation of assemblies. Assemblies are the backbones of the Gadaa System. They give Gadaa System a characteristic of a highly decentralized and loose federation, even of a confederation. Because of the autonomy of the lower levels of assemblies (and their corresponding Gadaa governments), Gadaa System is a highly decentralized federation held together by the constitution (*heera*), culture (*aadaa*), and customs. There are local, regional, moiety, and pan-Oromo (national) assemblies and their corresponding Gadaa governments.

All Oromo people of the Horn of Africa, currently estimated to be over fifty million, constitute one great polity, the Oromo nation. They inhabit about a third of Ethiopia, a significant part of northern Kenya, and northern and southwestern parts of Somalia. They could also be found as descendant communities in Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Northern Tanzania, Djibouti, Sudan, and South Sudan. The assembly of the Oromo nation is a pan-Oromo assembly. The pan-Oromo assembly, in its true sense, however, has not taken place for centuries.

The pan-Oromo assembly, in principle, is the source of all authority. It is the highest authority in the Gadaa System. It is the only body that can amend the Gadaa principles (constitution) or make new laws of national scope. Besides, it only can declare national war or peace. Other lower assemblies may declare regional or local war or peace and may make regional or local laws without prejudice to the Gadaa constitution.

In principle, every Oromo has the right to take part in the Assembly of the Nation, the pan-Oromo assembly. Nevertheless, the male head of the family stands for his wife and all the young people and dependents in his family. Dependents include non-Oromo migrants and those who have not yet been naturalized and have not, therefore, attained the status of sovereignty according to the Gadaa laws. In addition, the participation of the

populaces in its deliberations could only be possible through representation. However, only sovereign Oromo has the right to vote. There is a mechanism where another sovereign Oromo may stand for one or more sovereign Oromo heads of households. Accordingly, local assemblies nominate and appoint representatives to take part on their behalf in higher assemblies. Representatives are appointed usually from each lower lineage group.

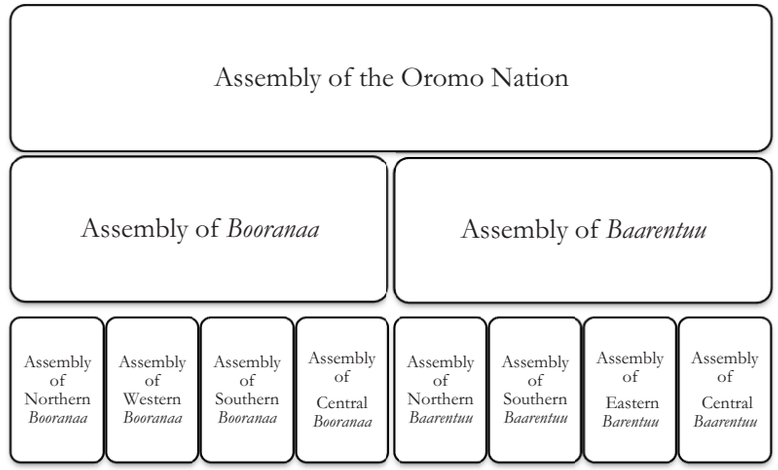


Figure 3.1. Higher Assemblies of the Oromo Nation

The legislative assembly (*Caffee*) usually has an informal facilitating council, which, upon appointment, may also take the role of adjudicator. It is an *ad hoc* council with members in lower odd numbers. The elected *Abbaa Gadaa* forms the *ad hoc* council from former *Abbaa Gadaa*s who have become *hayyuu* (legal scholars) in consultation with former *Abbaa Gadaa*s, *gosa* leaders, and other relevant institutions. The council plays a significant facilitation role during the legislative sessions of the *Caffee*. It keeps records of forwarded legal propositions from lower councils of the polity; it guides the legislative debates during the session; it audits the laws for the multitudes; it frames the legal propositions for the vote. At other times, the council stays inactive. In rare instances, it could be appointed by the *Abbaa Gadaa* or the Gadaa Council to settle profoundly serious and extraordinarily complex criminal and civil cases. In some cases, it may serve as a stand-by external legal counselor to the Gadaa government.

The Oromo nation is divided into two "equal" halves, moieties, known as *Booranaa* and *Baarentuu*. Each of the moieties is autonomous but confederated under the Gadaa Constitution. The *Booranaa* Confederation encompasses all the Northern, Southern, Western, and Central *Booranaa*. The *Baarentuu* Confederation, likewise, encompasses the Eastern, Northern, Southern, and Central *Baarentuu* (see *Figure 3.1*). These two Confederations are enormous polities that are divided further into geographical polities.

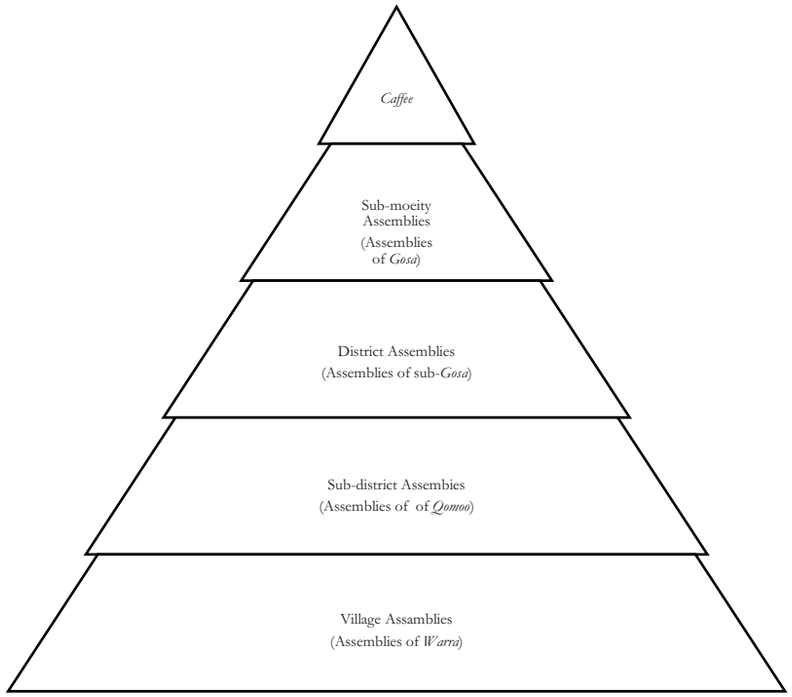

Caffee
Sub-moeity Assemblies (Assemblies of Gosa)
District Assemblies (Assemblies of sub-Gosa)
Sub-district Assemblies (Assemblies of of Qomoo)
Village Assamblies (Assemblies of Warra)

Figure 3.2. Constituents of *Caffee*, local polity

Each of the geographical divisions of both Confederacies could be considered as a regional polity. The geographic Western *Booranaa*, *Maccaa*, for example, is an autonomous regional polity confederated to the other *Booranaa*s. Yet, it has two confederacies within it: *Sadachaa* (*Oboo, Subbaa,* and *Hakaakoo*) and *Afree* (*Hookkoo, Calliyaa, Gudurru,* and *Liiban*). Each of them has multiple smaller political entities that have their own autonomous Gadaa governments, which could be referred to as local governments. The same is true for the constituents of these mega Confederations.

Accordingly, there are tens of local autonomous assemblies, i.e., autonomous Gadaa governments, throughout the Oromo nation. Each of the local governments has an assembly, *Caffee*. Each of them represents a local Gadaa government that is instituted according to the Gadaa constitution. *Figure 3.2.* stands for one such Assembly and its hierarchical constituent Assemblies.

Assembly of the *Boorana* Oromo of southern Ethiopia and Northern Kenya, for example, is a local assembly; and its Gadaa government is a local government. The *Caffee* has its process. *Figure 3.5* illustrates the process of *Caffee* (*Gumii*) of *Boorana* Oromo. The polity it stands for is limited to the *Boorana* of Southern *Booranaa*.

Note that, in *Figure 3.2*, the assemblies are not necessarily kinship assemblies. They are however close to kinship assemblies and make sense as such across Oromia because Oromo settlements are based on kinship relations. Such local polities and their respective governments confederate with "sister" polities and governments to form a higher polity and government. All the local Gadaa governments in Western *Booranaa*, for example, form the regional government of the *Maccaa* Oromo, which, in turn, confederates with the Gadaa government of the Northern *Booranaa*, the *Tuulamaa,* and form the *Maccaa-Tuulamaa* Confederation. When the *Maccaa-Tuulamaa* Confederation confederates with the rest of *Booranaa*, the *Booranaa* Confederation is formed. The *Baarentuu* Confederation is also formed analogously. The *Booranaa* Confederation and the *Baarentuu* Confederation jointly form the Oromo nation and the pan-Oromo Gadaa government.

In such a way, the Gadaa governments are formed at local, regional, higher, and supreme levels from corresponding polities that hold corresponding assemblies that continue to centralize under the Gadara constitution. The formation of so many lower levels of Gadaa Assemblies and their corresponding Gadaa governments has however been the result of extensive decentralization.

Historically, extensive decentralization of the Gadaa government contributed to the weakening of the higher and supreme levels of the Gadaa government. Gadaa System, by its nature, allows an extensive decentralization of the government. This is perhaps because it is more effective when the government is small, i.e., the political entity is limited both by geography and by population. The rapid expansion of the Oromo over the vast region may also have forced the higher levels of the Gadaa

governments to decentralize. The higher and supreme levels of Gadaa governments have little or no power over the regional and local governments nor do their assemblies meet. Some variations on the practice of the Gadaa System among some Oromo communities might have been the result of the gradual failing of the higher orders of Gadaa assemblies and governments. The whole Gadaa System and the Gadaa governments appear to be held together by the strength of the Gadaa constitution.

The most important Gadaa Assembly has now remained to be the local Assembly, the *Caffee*, and their corresponding local Gadaa governments. These Assemblies are almost autonomous. They have legislative powers: they can make local laws. Their Gadaa governments have well-structured Councils that work in unison as full-fledged government.

Every *Caffee* is constituted from thousands of lowest assemblies. *Figure 3.2* illustrates the pyramidal hierarchy. The number of such lower assemblies is enormous. At its lowest hierarchy, it could reach ten thousand. The *Caffee* of the *Arsii* (*Sikkoo*, *Mandoo*, and *Manna* of Arsi, West Arsi, and Bale Zones of Oromia State), known as *Manbadha,* with its historic center at *Odaa Roobaa*, for example, has been divided into many lower assemblies, *Xaddachaa*s. It has twenty sub-moiety assemblies, about five hundred sub-*gosa* assemblies, and close to ten thousand village assemblies (Teso, Hamado, and Chalenka, 2016, *Table* 1). There is no doubt that the number of such assemblies of the *Maccaa* Oromo of Western Oromia who inhabit seven Zones could be far greater. The enormity of the number of these assemblies is one of the very reasons the Oromo nation is known as the "nation of assemblies."

3.3.2. Non-legislative Assemblies

There are non-legislative assemblies in the Gadaa System. These include the *Qaalluu* Assembly, the *Gosa* Assembly, and the *Hiriyaa* Assembly.

3.3.2.1. *Qaalluu* Assembly

Qaalluu Assembly is the assembly of the *Qaalluus*. The *Qaalluu* are spiritual leaders of the Oromo people. They are not priests in conventional sense. They are primarily spiritual and ritual leaders of society. There are as many *Qaalluus* as the number of the major Oromo clans. Usually, two or

more major clans make up the lowest level of Oromo polity. Thus, there is the corresponding number of *Qaalluu*s, at least one senior and one junior, in a typical Oromo polity.

The assembly of the *Qaalluu* takes place once every eight years. *Abbaa Muudaa,* the spiritual head of the Oromo nation, chairs the assembly of the *Qaalluu*. The Assembly discusses spiritual and ritual matters independent of the political and juridical leadership. It does not interfere in the business of the *Caffee* or the Gadaa government, nor does it make any secular laws. It may issue spiritual edicts, prayer guidance, and ritual procedure.

The *Qaalluu* are not involved in politics: laws and customs prohibit them. They, however, serve as an equivalent of the civil society of modern democracies. They are counterpoised against the Gadaa institution. They may voice the grievances of the people against the oppressive Gadaa government and its *Abbaa Gadaa*.

The power relationship between the *Qaalluu* and the Gadaa (governing party) is not always smooth and clear. It may at times be adversarial or complementary. They, however, have distinct spheres of influences and authorities over the Oromo people. The *Caffee* may appoint new *Qaalluu*, and it may regulate the scope of authority, the roles, and the prerogatives of all the *Qaalluus*.

The appointment of *Qaalluu* is for life. Once a *Qaalluu* is appointed, his successors are not chosen. Succession is hereditary. The first appointment of a junior *Qaalluu*, however, could be an appointment by the community. This may take place when a clan divides and form a new clan or sub-clan that causes seeding a *Qaalluu*. In such a case, a respected member of the most senior family from among the members of the new political entity is appointed as its local (junior) *Qaalluu* by the new assembly. This means, all the five parties must endorse the new *Qaalluu*. After the appointment, succession would be hereditary. Because of that privilege, they are barred from running for any secular office.

The wife of a *Qaalluu* also shares the title and plays a vital role in succession. However, only the *rakoo* wife (first ritual wife) of the *Qaalluu* holds the title of *Qaallittii*. She commands enormous respect in society. Her role is ritual complementation and advisory. She has no equivalent spiritual authority and social respect as her husband; nor does she pass the title to her patrimonial descents. She keeps the title only so long as she is married to the *Qaalluu*. Even so, she is not a member of the *Qaalluu* Assembly.

The largest gatherings of the *Qaalluu* takes place during *Muudaa* Ceremony. Once every eight years, the Oromo, including all the *Qaalluu*, make a pilgrimage to the ritual residence of the *Abbaa Muudaa.* They seek blessings and advice. The Gadaa Council too does so once during its leadership of the polity.

3.3.2.2. *Gosa* Assembly

The *Gosa* Assembly is an assembly of the members of a g*osa* who could belong to all parties, all age-sets, and all Gadaa-grades but to one or the other moieties that constitute the dual-organization of the polity. *Gosa* is a mid-size Oromo lineage group. *Gosa* is closer in meaning to the term 'clan' but might not be as exclusive. It, however, constitutes a significant part of a local Gadaa government. A local polity might be composed of two or more g*osa.* There is always one "senior" g*osa* in an Oromo polity.

Every g*osa* has its assembly and its *hayyuu*. The assembly of *gosa* involves all its members, including women. It conducts its business under the principles of Gadaa and the applicable Gadaa laws. It discusses environmental, social, economic, and political issues that challenge the livelihood of the members. It also discusses its relationships with other *gosa* and other peoples around it. It may also discuss political and legal issues that the *gosa* would like it addressed in the *Caffee*. Yet, it has no legislative power. This, however, does not mean that it has no authority to issue rules and regulations that govern members of the *gosa*.

Every *gosa* has a leader, *hayyuu gosa*. There is always one *hayyuu gosa* who is elected from the lineage family of the alleged founder of the *gosa*. However, there could be more than one *hayyuu gosa*: three is the commonest among most of the Oromo communities. The *hayyuu gosa* are nominated, evaluated, and elected by members in the assembly session. The election takes place when a serving *hayyuu gosa* is incapacitated to perform his duty or change of the leadership of the *gosa* was necessitated by other factors. The *hayyuu gosa* are oftentimes retired *Abbaa Gadaas* who excel in their wisdom and leadership skills. Personal wealth may also play a factor in their election: they must be able to afford to serve the *gosa* as volunteers employing their own means.

In its function and representation, the assembly of the *gosa* is more associated with the assembly of the *Qaalluu*. The assembly does not stand for any single party or age-set or Gadaa-grade. Its members could be

members of every one of these institutions. The *hayyuu gosaa* stands for all members of the *gosa*. In other words, the *hayyuu gosaa* functions as an apolitical representative of the *gosa*. The *gosa* assembly may take place as often as necessary, but often time it takes place once every dry and wet season. A yearly *Gosa* Assembly is also common across Oromo communities.

3.3.2.3. *Hiriyaa* Assembly

Another non-legislative assembly of the Oromo polity is the *Hiriyaa* Assemblies. *Hiriyaa* is an institution of age-sets. It has no connection with Gadaa-grades: it is an exclusively age-based institution (Legesse, 2006). It crosscuts all the Gadaas (parties) and the moieties. Oromo men belong to the *Hiriyaa* institution based on the age-set to which they belong. Like the *Luba* institution (the Gadaa-grades), the *Hiriyaa* institution (the age-sets) becomes prominent after the members reach the age of twenty-four. In other words, both *Luba* formation and *Hiriyaa* formation take place at the beginning of the fourth grade of the Gadaa-grade and age-sets. *Hiriyaa Assembly* is, thus, the assembly of the Oromo youth belonging to the age-sets of 24-32 and 32-40. It is an irregular assembly: it assembles only during troubled times. Historically, the assembly had been instrumental in organizing massive fighting forces.

The importance of the *hiriyaa* institution becomes clear at war times. When one party is in power, about one-tenth of its members are in *Luba* grade. In principle, they should be between the age of forty-four and fifty-two, taking staggered succession into account. They are also the *Luba* warriors. The rest of the members of the party may belong to other age-sets, i.e., age-sets that correspond to other Gadaa-grades of the party. In addition, members of the remaining four parties (Gadaas) who belong to the corresponding age category of the *Luba* of the governing party are not *Luba* warriors. Furthermore, there are younger Oromo who belongs to the junior warrior ages from all the five parties. None of these is organized as *Luba* warriors: they all are organized as age-sets (*hiriyaa*) warriors. The *Hiriyaa* elect their council and their military leader (*Abbaa Cibraa*). *Hiriyaa* warriors are organized in regiments known as *Cibra*. They elect their age-set leaders, *hayyuu Hiriyaa*, and their age-set military leader, *Abbaa Cibraa.* The *Cibra* may be organized according to battles and may have its leaders, *jabaa waraanaa* (chiefs of battles). The *hayyuu hiriyaa* (*hiriyaa* Council), reports to the Gadaa

Assembly, which coordinates its strategic alignment with the *Luba* Council. At war times, the *Abbaa Cibra* are subordinates of the *Abbaa Duulaa*.

3.3.2. Structure of Gadaa Polity and Government

Oromo polity is, in general, constituted by the Gadaa and *Qaalluu* institutions. *Figure 3.3*. illustrates the overall structure of the Oromo polity. By referring to the Gadaa institutions alone, one excludes the *Qaalluu* institution. This is because the *Qaalluu* institution is not a political institution. Nevertheless, it is related to the Gadaa institutions and has some apolitical role in the Gadaa government. Our intention here is to introduce the political structure of the Gadaa System and the Gadaa government.

3.3.2.1. *Caffee*

The *Caffee*, as also discussed above, is the most important and the highest authority of the political entity (polity) and the local government. It is the highest legislative body of the local Gadaa government. The assembly meets once every eight years at the mid-term of the Gadaa government. It has different names in different regions of Oromia: *Caffee*, *Gumii*, *Manbadha* are some of the names.

In preparation for the *Caffee*, the polity holds many clan-based and locality-based assemblies. Each of them discusses issues of importance and prepares recommendations for legislation. The local assemblies are characteristically fragmented clan (*gosa*) assemblies. As they coalesce, they continue to amalgamate their common recommendations, thus refining issues of importance and reducing the number of recommendations. This would save time and effort during the formal debate to make or amend the law during the sessions of the assembly.

After days or weeks of the session of the assembly, the participants break into smaller sections to discuss further legal propositions or other matters of higher importance. The participants may breakup based on locality or clan (*gosa*) or based on the major constituents of the dual-moiety structure, whichever was found through experiences to be effective. The goal is to make a law or a decision acceptable to everyone. During the session, participants may take part in multiple such groups.

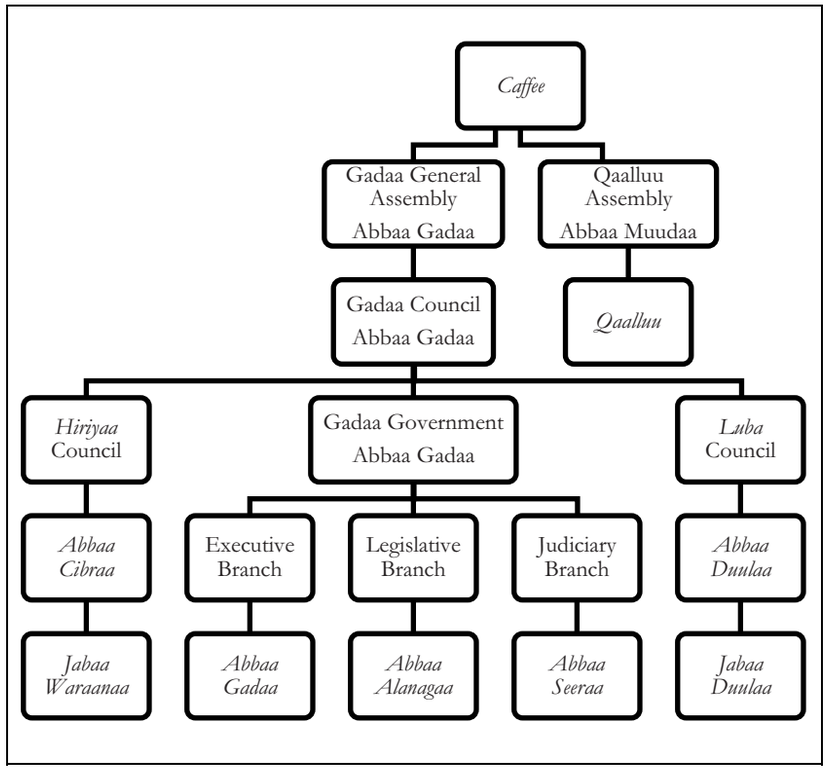


Figure 3.3. Structure of Oromo Polity

The assembly is time-consuming and full of enthusiastic debates. The Oromo take all the necessary time to come to a consensus because their laws are made only with consensus. They debate critical issues for weeks and months following the Principle of the Assembly (*Yaa'ii*).

Under the leadership of highly skilled chairperson of the *Caffee*, usually the *Abbaa Gadaa* or *hayyuu Guuddaa* (very senior and a highly experienced *hayyuu*), the *Caffee* may resolve all the propositions and make new laws or amend existing ones, or make important decisions and judgments successfully within the period of one to two months. Among the particularly important judgments is the evaluation of the governing Gadaa Council and its *Abbaa Gadaa*. If the *Caffee* rules that the performances were dissatisfactory, it removes the *Abbaa Gadaa* or the entire governing Council. Such ruling, however, has been rare. Unanimity in the approval of the laws or the decisions is the measure of success.

The *Caffee* also elects the First *Abbaa Gadaa* and his two deputies, the two Second *Abbaa Gadaas*, from among the six *hayyuu Aduulaa* of the Gadaa that become *Raaba Doorii* now and would take state power after four years. It also proclaims the six *hayyuu Aduulaa* who have just been elected by the *Qondaala* at the end of the *Qondaalaa* grade. The three *Abbaa Gadaa elects* are proclaimed during the session of the *Caffee*. They would soon start their intern training with the governing *Abbaa Gadaas*. The next four years would be the last years of their continued leadership development. It began sixteen years ago when they were elected *hayyuu Aduulaa* just like the ones who are just elected and proclaimed during the *Caffee* session (for activities of the *Caffee*, see *Figure 1.6* and Notes to *Figure 1.6*, number 13).

The *Qaalluu* Assembly and the Gadaa General Assembly (the assembly of the governing party) are answerable to the *Caffee*.

3.3.2.2. Gadaa General Assembly

The Gadaa General Assembly is, in principle, an assembly of a party, a Gadaa political party. The most important such assembly is the general assembly of the governing party. It is the assembly of all members of the party. However, it is, as in the case of the *Caffee*, an assembly of representatives. Here too only members of the party, who are sovereign, could propose laws and could vote.

By the very nature of its constitution, the Gadaa General Assembly of the governing party can have several powers. First, it has legislative powers, however limited in scope. It may make emergency laws within the established Gadaa principles on issues that fall outside of the Gadaa principles (Gadaa Constitution) or have higher and immediate relevance to the polity when it would be too long a time to wait until the upcoming convention of the *Caffee*, which has full legislative power. Historically, incoming Gadaa governments used to make lawful decrees. The *Caffee* assembly that would convene four years later in a four-year staggered succession may or may not uphold the decrees. Second, the Assembly may also make rules and regulations to address recent developments. Third, the Assembly has the power to evaluate its Gadaa government and the *Abbaa Gadaas*. The evaluation is internal, but it could result in the removal of the *Abbaa Gadaa* or his executive officials if severe misdemeanors or transgression of the laws were found.

Because of the passion of members to make their Gadaa a success, the middling performance of the Gadaa government in general and that of the *Abbaa Gadaas*, in particular, is not tolerated. Every member knows that earning a bad reputation is not an option: it would weigh heavily on the next generation, the now *Dabballee* children. In addition, in an equally competitive five-party system, a one-time failure could be historical ridicule for the party.

Gadaa General Assembly could be called as many times as necessary between once a year and once every eight years. Commonly, the Assembly takes place before the formal power-takeover when the newly inaugurated governing Gadaa may proclaim some laws, before the date of the *Caffee* when the *Caffee* makes or amends laws and evaluates the Gadaa government, and before the power hand over. The dates of the Assemblies are determined by the *ayyaantuu*, the time-reckoners.

The elected *Abbaa Bokkuu* or *Abbaa Gadaa* of the party chairs the assembly of the multitudes. A retired *Abbaa Gadaa*/*Abbaa Bokkuu* or very senior *hayyuu* may also chair or co-chair the *Caffee*.

3.3.2.3. *Luba* Council

Luba Council is the assembly of all sovereign members of the governing party (Gadaa) who are currently at the *Luba* grade of the Gadaa System or the representatives thereof. At a point in time, the *Luba* represent about two percent of the polity. When it is challenging to have all of them in an assembly, representatives assemble. Representatives are elected from designated geography that might be likened to modern electoral districts. A representative is elected based on his demonstrated leadership and bravery. Such elected *Luba* stands for a group of *Luba* on the Council.

The *Luba* Council becomes more active during wartimes. The *Luba* are the senior warriors. *Abbaa Duulaa,* who could also be the *Abbaa Gadaa* himself at war times, is the leader of the *Luba* warriors. Luba warriors set an ambitious military goal for themselves. The goals are set incremental to their predecessor's goals and often focus on earning memorable legacy for the Luba and the Oromo nation. Hence, it is likely to involve war. Historically, in the 16th century, every new *Luba* used to liberate more of the occupied Oromo territory. When there is an active war, the Luba Council meets regularly and strategize the offensive or defensive battles of the war.

The *Luba* Council may play multiple roles. Its leading role is oversight of the agency of *Abbaa Duulaa*. The Council may also develop local military strategy, coordinate the *Hiriyaa* warriors with the *Luba* warriors during the time of war, and organize Gadaa General Assembly and the *Caffee*. It may also prepare legal propositions for the interim decree and the deliberation of the Gadaa General Assembly and the *Caffee*. In the case of the former, it would be the decree that the incoming *Luba* would emergency declare at once after taking power. In addition, it may deal with other relevant issues that have a broader scope than what the minimalist local Gadaa government might handle.

The *Luba C*ouncil meets ordinarily every two years. Among the *Maccaa* Oromo, this convention is associated with *mijuu*, a cleansing ceremony that takes place every two years. In total, the Luba could meet four times if assembles only regularly. During wartime, it could meet more often, as may be necessary. The elected *Abbaa Gadaa*/*Abbaa Bokkuu* chairs the *Luba* Council meetings.

3.3.2.4. *Hiriyaa* Council

Hiriyaa Council is made up of the elected leaders of the age-sets, *hayyuu Hiriyaa*. Only matured age-sets elect *hayyuu Hiriyaa*. The most common and most active ones are age-sets 24–32 (*Dargaggoo*) and 32–40 (*Gaheessa*). The elected age-set councilors of these age-sets set up the *Hiriyaa* Councils. The Councils organize its meetings on the affairs of its members and address the issues with the Gadaa Assembly. *Hiriyaa* Councils are very localized, and their meetings are prompted by local issues. They are dormant except during the time of conflicts and massive social and economic engagements. During these periods, the *Hiriyaa* Councils easily mobilize all members and make important decisions. They, however, remain ancillary to the Gadaa Council.

3.3.2.5. Gadaa Council

Gadaa Council, *Yaa'a,* also referred to as "Gadaa Assembly" by Asmarom Legesse (2006)), is fundamentally the council of the elected body of the *Luba*. In other words, the Council is constituted by elected *Abbaa Gadaas*. Among the *Boorana* Oromo of southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya, which this writer has chosen for illustration of the structure of the

Council here, for example, they are six in number. One of them is First *Abbaa Gadaa*, two of them are Second *Abbaa Gadaas*, and the remaining three are member *Abbaa Gadaas*.

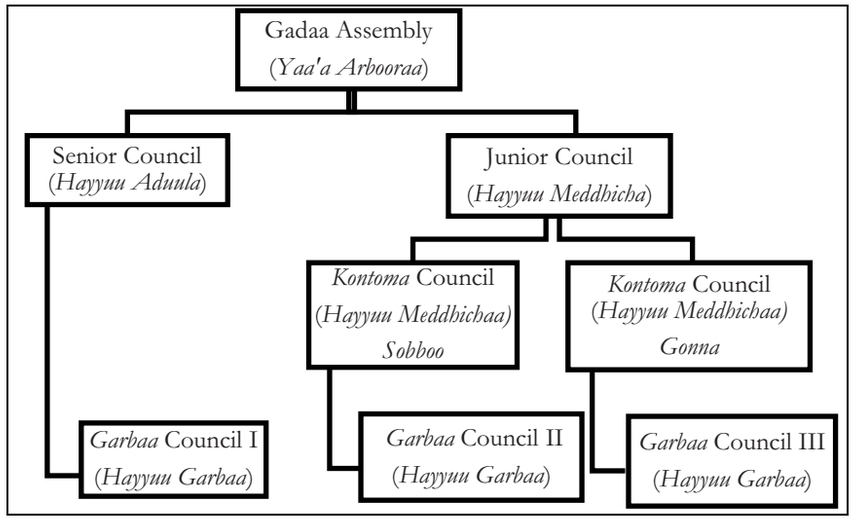


Figure 3.4. Structure of Gadaa Council of Boorana
Note. Based on Legesse (2006)

According to Legesse (2006), the Gadaa Assembly of *Boorana* (*Yaa'a Arbooraa*) is divided into two Councils: "Senior Council" and "Lateral Council." They are constituted from *hayyuu Aduulaa* and *Hayyuu Meddhichaa* respectively. The latter is divided further into two *Kontomaa* Councils, standing for the two moieties of the polity. In addition, there exists a third Council known as "Junior Council" whose members, *hayyuu Garbaa*, are attached to the "Senior Council" and the two branches of the Lateral Council. *Figure 3.4*. illustrates the divisions and the relations within the Gadaa Council.

3.3.2.6. Gadaa Government

The Council of the elected *Abbaa Gadaas* and their advisors (*hayyuu*) head offices of the Gadaa Government. One of these elected *Abbaa Gadaas*, the First *Abbaa Gadaa*, is the designated head of the government. In some cases, the government could be named after him or after the group name of

the *Luba* that had been given to it at the naming ceremony (*maq-baasa/ammachiisa*) during the transition rite from *Dabballee* to *Ittimakoo*.

There are three levels of government in the Gadaa System: Pan Oromo (National), regional, and local. At all levels, the separation of power among the three main branches of the government is clear. At all levels, the First *Abbaa Gadaa* himself chairs the executive. The appointees of the *Abbaa Gadaa* and his Council head the legislative and the judiciary branches: *Abbaa Alangaa* and *Abbaa Seeraa* head them respectively. Traditionally, the *Abbaa Seeraa* occupies the office for more than on Gadaa terms and functions as chief justice to ensure institutional memory and correct memorization of the laws. Other members of the branches of the Gadaa Council, i.e. *hayyuu Meddhichaa* and *hayyuu Garbaa*, are assigned to lead other executive functions under the *Abbaa Gadaa* as may be necessary.

However, it is important to note that, functionally, the legislative branch is not exactly like the legislative branches of modern democracies. Its function is more of law enforcement. More specifically, it is closer in function to the General Prosecutor's Office. As discussed above, the power to make laws rests with the *Caffee*. This, however, does not mean this branch of the Gadaa government is devoid of any involvement, at all times from any kind, of lawmaking. It may aid the Gadaa Council in preparing emergency laws. As noted above, the Gadaa General Assembly of the ruling Gadaa has the power to make decrees as may be necessary whenever urgent matters arise in-between the meetings of the *Caffee*. In such cases, the legislative branch may prepare the decrees on behalf of the Gadaa government but as the express agency of the *Caffee*.

In addition, it is also important to note that the executive branch is not as well organized and instituted into ministerial office as in modern democracies. Nonetheless, the offices of *Abbaa Sa'aa* (the economy), *Afkaalaa* (in charge of trade), *Dubbisaa* (external relations), *Abbaa Qabiiyyee* (property registrar), *Abbaa Fugnoo* (allocator of communal lands), etc. that are common among some Oromo polities appear to be well organized in the likeness of modern Ministries and Agencies. It nonetheless has no formal bureaucracy, nor does it collect regular taxes. The very minimalist Gadaa government depends on contributions to finance its activities. It enforces policies and changes through persuasion and peers' influence.

The executive branch does not impose itself on the other branches. Both *Abbaa Alangaa* and *Abbaa Seeraa* are free from the influence of the

governing Gadaa or the *Abbaa Gadaa* and the executive branch. They deal only with established laws and their enforcement. However, because of the lack of the modern type of bureaucracy, both depend on the voluntary participation of the citizens, particularly that of the *Raaba* and the elderly elites, to enforce the laws and to administer justice respectively.

The offices of *Abbaa Alangaa* and *Abbaa Seeraa* have separate but related roles. The key role of the office of *Abbaa Seeraa* is keeping the oral record of the laws, memorizing them for the audience whenever necessary, and administering justice. Retired *Abbaa Gadaas* and *Luba*s become judges based on their good reputation in society. This is particularly important because in the Oromo justice administration system both the accuser and the accused must agree to be judged by a certain volunteer judge or a group of judges. The judges are nominated from the community by both sides based on their reputations. The nominees form a jury. Only highly respected members of the community, mostly *Yuba*, are privileged to serve as judges. The main role of the office of *Abbaa Alangaa* is making sure that the governing Gadaa and its official, the Oromo, all other people in the jurisdiction of the Gadaa government follow the law; and every lawbreaker is punished evenhandedly according to the law. The *Abbaa Alangaa* works closely with the *Hayyuu Raaba* and the *Raaba* of the party next in line to take the state power.

Furthermore, there is an office known variably as *Bokkuu, Irressa, Fagii, Tufaa* in the Gadaa government. It is primarily a ritual office. Duressa (2002) states, "the position of *Abbaa Bokkuu* (holder of scepter) is occupied by an individual who has the ritual primacy among the *aduulaa* (members of supreme council)": "The primacy is based on primogeniture's privilege of the clans" (p. 121). Some writrs consider it as the office of the Spokesperson of the Gadaa government. According to Kassa (2012), the office of *Bokkuu* is an added complimentary office occupied by an official, "*Abbaa Bokkuu*," who is the spokesperson of the Gadaa government. According to Kelbessa (2010), *Bokkuu* is a junior official: he is a ritual official of the Gadaa government. He is not elected directly as the *Abbaa Gadaa* (Mamo, 2017; Kelbessa, 2010). Among the *Boorana*, *Bokkuu* is someone chosen from *Yuba IV* grade. He mentors the *Raaba* grade and oversees their rituals throughout their *Doorii* stage and the *Luba* grade. *Fagii* is a ritual advisor and cultural mentor among the *Gujii* Oromo. Antoine de Abbadie describes *Irreessaa* as grand pontiff of the Gadaa of the *Maccaa* in the mid-19th century. In general, the office of *Bokkuu* appears to be responsible primarily for ritual oversights

and occupied by very senior officers, who take the office based on clan or family primacy or seniority. Further research may clarify by who and how the office of *Bokkuu/Irreessaa/Fagii/ Tufaa* is occupied.

This, however, should not lead to confusing the *Abbaa Bokkuu* with *Bokkuu*. Among the *Maccaa* and *Tuulamaa,* the *Abbaa Bokkuu* is the *Abbaa Gadaa*, and the two names are used interchangeably. One can also be certain that none of the elected *hayyuu Aduulaa* occupies the office of *Bokkuu/Irreessaa/Fagii/Tufaa;* neither in the name of *Abbaa Bokkuu* nor *Abbaa Gadaa*. Even though there exists a different understanding of the *Abbaa Gadaa* and *Abbaa Bokkuu* among some Oromo communities and Gadaa scholars, there is no doubt among most of the Oromo the two names stand for the same office and the same person. As the name of the highest office of the Oromo polity, the appellation '*Abbaa Gadaa*' is the most appropriate one, but it is safe to use the two interchangeably.

3.4. The Complex Concept of Gadaa

There are value-laden complex concepts in the Oromo language and world view: *safuu, aadaa, kaawoo, finna*, and *Gadaa* are some of them. They are so rich and so deep in meaning that each of such concepts could be considered as a philosophical theme. For beginner students of the political or other culture of the Oromo, understanding them could be a nightmare, more so for those who study them as outsiders. Even so, after additional efforts, one could learn not only the individual concepts but their interrelations and overlaps. This, however, could take time because it requires discerning the intricate meanings associated with these complex concepts.

The concept of Gadaa is uniquely Oromo. It is an integral part of their identity, worldview, and way of life. It has been with them in every walks of their lives for centuries, at least, and for a couple of millennia, at most. Others find it difficult to understand it at first because it is a complex concept with so many interpretations. The array of interpretations of this single term, Gadaa, confuses even the well-informed scholars. The Gadaa polymath, Professor Asmarom Legesse asserts this when he says the word Gadaa "cannot be given a univocal interpretation: It stands for several related ideas" (Legesse, 1973, p. 81). It takes outsiders additional rigor to understand the

Oromo worldviews and way of life to understand fully the concept and meanings of Gadaa. Without understanding Gadaa (and Gadaa System), it is impossible to understand the Oromo society. That is why Oromo scholars agree that it is impossible to understand Oromo without understanding the Gadaa System.

Understanding Gadaa is however not an easy undertaking. A mere mention of "Gadaa" or "*Sirna Gadaa"* (Gadaa System) among the Oromo has over two dozen related meanings and references. Its meanings may relate to (1) a grade, (2) a period, (3) an age-set, (4) a generation, (5) a political party, (6) a rite, (7) public office, (8) legitimate state power, (9) laws, (10) a council, (11) an institution, (12) a democracy, (13) a holistic system, (14) a socio-economic development, (15) a civilization, (16) a way of life, (17) a chronology, (18) history, (19) a philosophy, (20) a method of distributing authority and responsibility, (21) a form of government, (22) a form of sanctity, (23) an ideology, (24) a system of peace, and (25) a state.

1. As a *grade*, it refers to the class of Oromo people who belong to the sixth of the eleven eight-years-interval membership grades. In rare cases, it is used interchangeably with *Luba*.

2. As a *period*, it refers to (1) the eight years interval of the age-sets, (2) the eight years interval of the Gadaa-grades, (3) the single term of leadership service of the elected Oromo leaders. In general, it refers to a calendar of events, rituals, ceremonies, and regular changes of government. This eight-year epoch is known as *jaarraa*. One *jaarraa* is one Gadaa; five *jaarraa* is one Gadaa generation; two Gadaa generations is one full Gadaa Cycle (*mara Gadaa*).

3. As an *age-set***,** it denotes several advanced age-sets followed by ordinal numbers. They are Gadaa *I* (40–48 years old), Gadaa *II* (48–56 years old), Gadaa *III* (56–64 years old), Gadaa *IV* (64–72 years old), and Gadaa *V* (72–80 years old). This is the practice among localized Oromo polities. Others, including this writer, prefer to employ *Gameessa, Maanguddoo I, Maanguddoo II, Maanguddoo III, and Maanguddoo IV,* respectively. The most common usage of 'Gadaa' as age-set, however, is to denote the sixth age-set (40–48 years).

4. As a *generation***,** it refers to the Gadaa of the genealogical generation of fathers (*Malbaa, Muudanaa, Kiilolee, Biifolee,* and *Michillee*) and the Gadaa of the genealogical generation of sons (*Harmuufaa, Roobalee, Birmajii, Mul'ataa,* and *Duuloo*). The five Gadaas of the fathers' form one Gadaa genealogical generation and the five corresponding Gadaas of the sons form another Gadaa genealogical generation. The Gadaas of the genealogical generation of fathers and sons, together, form one full cycle Gadaa generation.

5. As a *political party*, it refers to the five born-in membership associations (*Shanan* Gadaa) of the Oromo that is divided into two hemicycles of the Gadaa of the generation of the fathers and sons. Every Oromo is born into the *Gadaa* of his father, but he has the right to change. If he does, he becomes *guulaa*[1]. However, no Oromo can dismember himself from all Gadaas. Thus, all-male Oromo belong to a Gadaa (party). Gadaa membership among the Oromo is universal and mandatory.

6. As a *rite*, it refers to the passage rite of men from *Raaba* grade to *Luba* (confusingly, also known as Gadaa) grade. The passage rite is celebrated as having a hold on one's father's Gadaa (*Gadaa Abbaa qabachuu*). It is celebrated with elaborate private and public ceremonies (*Buttaa*) following a predetermined ritual. It marks the moment of transition of Oromo men to matured adulthood (except for the very late-born sons), ready to shoulder the responsibility of governing or leading the community, the *gosa*, or the regional or national Oromo polity.

7. As a *public office*, it refers to the office of the head of the polity and government, and its bureaucracy. Occupants of this public office are conferred with the title "*Abbaa Gadaa,"* which means 'father of the Gadaa.'

8. As the only *legitimate state power*, it refers to an embodiment of the collective will of the free people. It denotes the source of all political power that comes neither from the Supreme Being nor from

prophets nor any patriarchal figure but from the collective will of the people who are free and sovereign.

9. As a *law***,** it refers to the bodies of laws of the Oromo. These bodies of laws include natural law (*seera uumaa*), man-made law (*seera tumaa*), customary law (*seera aadaa*), and moral and ethical law (*seera safuu).*

10. As *a Council***,** it refers to the assembly of the elected Gadaa leaders (also known as *yaa'a* Gadaa) and its sub-councils. In this context, whenever an Oromo says, "Gadaa has made a decision," he/she mean the Gadaa Council has decided.

11. As an *institution*, it refers to the tripartite organization of check and balance through the senior, junior, and lateral councils of the Gadaa government. They are the ruling, the opposition, and the ancillary councils, respectively. The three constitute the Gadaa government. Gadaa as an institution of governance refers to the trio council.

12. As a *democracy*, it refers to the supremacy of law, representations, elections, limited-term of office, and separation of powers, balanced opposition, staggered succession, progressive leadership evaluation, and the mid-term public appraisal of the Gadaa government. More specifically, it refers to the process of popular political participation, the sovereignty of the head of the household, liberty of every adult member of the polity, the practice of rule of law, limited government, equality, regular elections, and regular power transfers.

13. As a *holistic system*, it refers to the comprehensive social, political, military, economic, environmental, and ritual organization of the Oromo and their democratic, egalitarian, federal, and republican governance systems, both at the pan-Oromo level and at the regional and local government level.

14. As a *socio-economic development*, Gadaa refers to the level of social and economic development of the Oromo. As such, it sometimes signifies, not replace, the Oromo concept of socio-economic development, known as *finna*[2]. Progressive *Gadaas* represent the

progressive *finna* (for more on the Principle of *Finna*, see the discussion under section 2.3.36.). Sometimes, the Gadaa is named together with the corresponding *finna*, as in *Gadaan Badhaadhina* (Gadaa is prosperity), *Gadaan Hormaata* (Gadaa is abundance), *Gadaan Dagaaga* (Gadaa is excess), for example.

15. As a *civilization,* it refers to the advancement of the Oromo in instituting a democratic and egalitarian form of a socio-political and cultural system from an evolutionary merge of philosophical and practical accomplishments of the Oromo to achieve holistic peace, social harmony, and socio-economic prosperity. It symbolizes an indigenous African civilization in general and the Oromo advancement in integrated socio-political thoughts. Championing the ideals of the sovereignty of citizens and republican form of democracy many centuries before such ideas would start to emerge in the Western world as a form of the practical countrywide governance system, the Oromo pioneered a socio-political sophistication, which may be called Gadaa civilization.

16. As a *way of life*, it refers to freedom, rational thinking, pragmatism, and the continued quest for achieving an ideal state of holistic peace on one hand and the realization of one's own full potential on the other hand. It also refers to a pragmatic and free but highly structured and orderly lifestyle.

17. As a *chronology***,** it refers to the history of perpetual peaceful transfer of political power from one party to another party every eight years, without delay and interruption. It also refers to the flow of generations of the Oromo fathers and sons through time according to the established generation-sets. Besides, it serves as a history and an eight years' time capsule chronicle[3] of the successive Gadaa governments.

18. As a *history***,** it represents the oral records of the socio-economic development and the politico-military achievements of the past as the legacy of the Oromo ancestors. It serves as the foundation for

the present state of the Oromo and as a stepping-stone and as a guide for its future.

19. As a *philosophy* (worldview), it refers to the aggregation of social, legal, cultural, environmental, and religious ideals of the Oromo as a whole and the egalitarian, democratic, and republican political ideals of the Gadaa System based on which the Gadaa constitution is formulated. It is a philosophy of liberal pragmatism, unveiled and unadulterated.

20. As a *method of distributing authority and responsibility*, it refers to the decentralization of powers and responsibilities vertically and horizontally throughout the lifetime of an Oromo commensurate with their age-sets and Gadaa-grades.

21. As a *form of government*, it refers to an embodiment of pure republicanism and grassroots democracy.

22. As *sanctity*, it refers to the foundation of *Waaqeffannaa* that promotes universal spiritualism and universal monotheistic faith in one Supreme Divine, *Waaqa*, which is believed to have always been singular and one and the only divine for all humanity.

23. As an *ideology*, it refers to the promotion and maintenance of equality, justice, peace, judiciousness, harmony, and solicitous mutual relations.

24. As a *system of peace*, it refers to holistic peace as the all-time end towards which all efforts of the Gadaa System are directed. The end goal of the Gadaa System is achieving apposite peace for human society and the cosmic ecosystem.

25. As a *state*, it refers to the permanent institutional framework of the Gadaa government within which the elected leaders exercise the power vested on them according to the Gadaa constitution and the laws. This is clear when the Oromo say, "Gadaa has been lost." while they are practicing Gadaa System in politically adjusted form. They

> simply mean their State has been lost after the domination of the modern Ethiopian State.

Understanding these multiple meanings and references of the term Gadaa is very crucial for the comprehensive understanding of the Gadaa System. It may be as much important as it is difficult. Understanding the multiple meanings and references of the term Gadaa is the key to not only a theoretical understanding of the Gadaa System but also for understanding the culture, values, way of life, and philosophical thinking of the Oromo people. In other words, to understand the Gadaa System in its totality is to understand *Oromummaa*. The Gadaa System is the hallmark of *Oromummaa*.

3.5. Attempts to Define Gadaa or Gadaa System

Because of the above multiple meanings and references of the term Gadaa in Oromo democracy, it has been difficult to define Gadaa or Gadaa System unequivocally. The generalization is agreeable. There is no single best definition of the Gadaa System. According to Sirna (2012), Gadaa is simply onerous to be defined. Kedir (2016) concurs with Sirna (2012) when he says:

> the term Gadaa is very difficult to define precisely. It is a term loosely used for so many varied concepts that it has not any single meaning. The dividing line between the various definitions is shrouded in mystery and indistinct unless contexts or terms are understood. This is because the interpretation of Oromo terms, idiomatic expressions and proverbs related to the Gadaa have extra meaning other than their surface meanings. Based upon this diction, it [is] impossible to give precise meaning and definition of Gadaa. (n. p)

Particularly for non-Oromo and for those Oromo people who have not practiced Gadaa System, it is difficult to comprehend the multiple meaning of Gadaa. The full comprehension of the meaning of the Gadaa or Gadaa government can only be found among the Oromo who have internalized it through years of practice and having lived it as an all-inclusive system. As a result, neither attempts of outsiders to define the Gadaa System, whether genuine or biased, has ever been free from major misrepresentation or

misunderstanding nor does any single definition has ever been adequately appropriate to capture what Gadaa System is in its totality. The Gadaa System has remained one of the challenging systems to define exhaustively.

Even interested anthropologists find it difficult to define Gadaa System comprehensively. This is due to the extensive depth and width of the thoughts in the system. Professor Asmarom Legesse, who has become a prominent scholar of the system, conducted a very systematic and comprehensive study of the Gadaa System among the Boorana Oromo of southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya for his esteemed Ph.D. degree at Harvard University in the early 1970s. Yet, this sagacious social anthropologist admits that it is exceedingly difficult to confine the meaning of the Gadaa System into a single definition. He could only describe it as follows:

> The Gada [Gadaa] System is an institution that represents an extreme development of a type of social structure known to anthropologists as age-sets. … [I]t is one of the most astonishing and instructive turns the evolution of human society has taken. ... Among the [Oromo] of Ethiopia, the institution has reached a most remarkable level of complexity. … [H]here we find a society that is stratified into two distinct but cross-cutting systems of peer group structures. One is a system in which the members of each class are recruited strictly on the basis of chronological age. The other is a system in which the members are recruited equally strictly on the basis of genealogical generations. The first has nothing to do with genealogical ties. The second has nothing to do with age. Both types of social groups are formed every eight years. Both sets of groups pass from one stage [grade] of development to the next every eight years. All [Oromo] males have a position in both systems. (Legesse, 1973, p. 50)

After three decades of research and reflection, however, he could define the Gadaa System more succinctly. Thus, the most recent and the most well-ordered definition of the Gadaa System yet is the one provided by Legesse (2006). Accordingly:

> **The GADA SYSTEM is a system of *generation segments* or gada classes that succeed each other every eight years**

> **in assuming political, military, judicial, legislative, and ritual responsibilities. Each active gada class—beyond the first three grades—has its own internal leadership (*Adula*) and its own assembly (*ya'a*), but the leaders of the class become the leaders of the nation when their class comes to power in the middle of the life cycle—a stage of life called "*gada*" among the Borana or "*Luba*" among the central Oromo. The class in power is headed by the *Abbaa* Gada in Borana, *Abbaa* Bokku elsewhere**. [All emphasis in the original] (Legesse, 2006, pp. 103–104)

This writer does not pretend to define the Gadaa system concisely any better. It could be defined in multiple ways and from multiple points of view. Cultural, political, social, ritual, and religious points of view have been filtered into the existing definitions. These definitions have also incorporated the socio-political dynamics of the Oromo nation. These have made the definition of the Gadaa System unsettled. However, it may be proper to elaborate on it as follows:

The Gadaa System is an integrated socio-political and cultural system of the Oromo nation of the Horn of Africa. It is a multifaceted form of an egalitarian, democratic, and republican political system. It has structured the nation vertically into a dual moiety system of ancestries and horizontally into five non-lineage parties. It also has divided each party into two *lubas* (genealogical generations) of fathers and sons. *Qaalluus*, spiritual leaders, head the dual moieties, which replicate in every Oromo polity. The moieties are also further divided into descent lineage structures.

Every member of a party passes progressively through eleven age-sets and eleven Gadaa-grades, every eight years, with distinctive duties and responsibilities. The Age-sets are 0–8 years (*Daa'ima*), 8–16 years (*Ijoollee*), 16–24 years (*Qeerroo*), 24–32 years (*Dargaggoo*), 32–40 years (*Gaheessa*), 40–48 years (*Gameessa*), 48–56 years (*Maanguddoo I*), 56–64 years (*Maanguddoo II*), 64–72 years (*Maanguddoo III*), 72–80 years (*Maanguddoo IV*), and above 80 years (*Jaarsa*). The Gadaa grades are *Dabballee, Ittimakoo, Qondaala, Kuusa, Raaba, Luba/Gadaa, Yuba I, Yuba II, Yuba III, Yuba IV, and Gadamoojjii,* in ascending order. The age-sets and Gadaa grades match perfectly only when a son is born at once after the fatherhood ceremony of his father.

Politically, the most important Gadaa grade is the sixth grade, the *Luba* grade. At this grade, the leaders of the new *Luba* (*hayyuu Aduulaa*), who had been elected at the end of the third grade and groomed for office since then, take state power from the retiring *Luba* of the preceding party, after they had been elected to the office of First *Abbaa Gadaa* and his two deputies by the *Caffee*.

One of the Gadaas (parties) becomes the governing Gadaa for eight years in a regular cyclic succession every forty years. Only an elected *Luba*/Gadaa Council takes office and forms the Gadaa government. The elected Gadaa Council of the governing party works in close collaboration and continued consultation with the elected representatives of the non-governing rest four parties (the opposition). It also collaborates closely with elected representatives of the two moieties from among the same party that form a shadow government.

The First *Abbaa Gadaa*, the head of the government, chairs the governing Gadaa Council. It governs through a mechanism of three subordinate Councils, one executive and two shadows each having representatives of the opposition parties as a member. The Councils are chaired by the First *Abbaa Gadaa* and the two Second *Abbaa Gadaas,* respectively. In addition to having several integrated Councils with separate leaders, Gadaa System has a clear separation of powers. State powers are separated primarily into legislative, executive, and judiciary. The state power is also distributed both vertically and horizontally.

The governing Gadaa/*Luba* Council is answerable to the assembly of the people, the *Caffee*. The *Caffee* maintains the power to review the performances of the governing Council and the *Abbaa Gadaas* at the mid-term of their lease of office. Should they have failed to uphold the Gadaa constitution (*heera*), Gadaa laws (*seera*), culture and customs (*aadaa*), moral, ethics, and natural harmony (*safuu*), the liberty of the Oromo, or any established public values and civilities, the *Caffee* may remove them from office and install a replacement. The *Abbaa Gadaa*, the senior *hayyuu*, or the *Bokkuu* chair the *Caffee*. A hereditary *Abbaa Muudaa*, who is apolitical, chairs the Assemblies of the *Qaalluu*.

The pan-Oromo *Caffee* is the supreme authority. It is the supreme legislative body of the nation; it only can amend the Gadaa constitution, make or amend laws of national scope, or declare national war or peace. The regional Gadaa governments, which usually have several local Gadaa

governments under them, are self-governing Gadaa governments confederated to the pan-Oromo Gadaa government through the common Gadaa Constitution that has structured the Gadaa governments and the Oromo society uniformly. The local Gadaa governments are autonomous political entities that have their *Caffee* but are confederated with sister polities at several levels under the Gadaa constitution and common socio-political and cultural values and *Oromummaa,* Oromo national identity.

Gadaa System is a comprehensive, self-sufficient, and highly sophisticated system. It is the only system that has "a base of the democratic and egalitarian political system" (Hinew, 2012, p. 100) in the Horn of Africa. It is better known as a system of government. Most commonly, it is referred to as "Gadaa System," or simply as "Gadaa." It is also referred to as "Gadaa Democracy" or "Oromo Democracy." The latter references are of recent. The naming has little to do with the comprehensive understanding of the system because it always means more than the names.

Most non-Oromo scholars who have written about the system, with clear exceptions of Asmarom Legesse, have demonstrated some limitations of getting the bigger picture and the depth of the complexity of this noble system of government. Such limitations have been widespread among the Abyssinian and Western Abyssinian-Ethiopia-nist scholars who have continued to undermine the genius of the Oromo who had invented it. It seems that *Abba* Bahrey had understood the Gadaa System in the 16th century much better than some of the Abyssinian (Amhara and Tigre) scholars do today. One may find a good reason for this in the obstinacy and arrogance of some of these scholars demonstrate in their unwitty attacks on the Gadaa System by making some observation of their works filled with Abyssinian cultural egotism. Nothing has become the biggest victim of this megalomania of Abyssinian elites than the Gadaa system of the Oromo.

Some Western scholars have also been echoing the ever-waxing Abyssinian cultural egotism at the expense of the cultures of the vast majority of the Ethiopian nations who, including the Oromo, until very recently had a very little culture of literature. Few have copied Abyssinian elites' envious attacks on the Gadaa System of the Oromo. They have been so consoled with what they could find readily available in Abyssinian scribed or printed sources for their academic or non-academic pursuits however biased or inaccurate or filled with nepotism to the level that it could no more be

considered any better than mere propaganda. They took all the Abyssinian self-praises at the expense of others at face value and did immeasurable damage by taking the insults to the international stage. Even when they were aware that their sources were or could be biased, they cared no more. Even today, scholars tend to consider a readily available written record, even if it could be a compiled dishonesty, more valuable than the truth in the air that may demand more effort to obtain. By copying the embellished and egotistic Abyssinians without any direct input from the nations concerned, Western scholars have shown no regard to the cultures and identities of the rest of the Ethiopian nations, nationalities, and peoples.

Since recently, however, the genius of the Oromo has become known. Now, neither the Abyssinian antagonistic elites nor their few copyist Western scholars could ignore the sophistication of the socio-political ideals of the Gadaa System. In comparison to modern democracies, no one can overlook the lawmaking culture of the Oromo and the democracy of the Gadaa System.

3.6. The Legalistic Culture of the Oromo

The Oromo makes both the *heera* (constitution) and *seeraa* (laws) in consensus. Once the laws are made, no one is above the laws. The laws stand above all men and women – including the leaders, the *Abbaa Gadaas*, with no exception: always, at all places, and across every section of the society. The Oromo assertively and assuredly say "*Seerri namaa oli, Waaqa gadi!"* (The law is above men, below *Waaqa*!). They also say, "*Seerri amma ilmoo nama mararti*" (The law is as dear as own child). These are clear indications of the eminence of the law in the Oromo society, and how high above themselves they place the law. It is only *Waaqa* who may break the laws; no Oromo can break any law without due punishment. The law punishes and protects everyone equally and fairly, including, the *Abbaa Gadaas*.

The laws are made and amended by the representatives of the people, who are the source of sovereignty and the laws, every eight years at the *Caffee*. The laws are structured strictly into *seera Uumaa* (natural/cardinal law) and *seera barmaa* (customary law) which are instituted in *safuu* and *aadaa* of the Oromo and *seera tumaa* (positive/enacted law including the Gadaa constitution). Both *safuu*, *aadaa* and *seera tumaa*, and followed by the people

strictly and the officials of the Gadaa System and other institutions of the Oromo society. This absolute subordination of the Oromo to the rule of law (with its total legitimacy and enforcement) has helped the Oromo to organize themselves effectively based only on the laws that they have willingly enacted. They drew their biggest strength from the rule of law. Their all-inclusive socio-political order is based only on the rule of law.

In Oromo Gadaa democracy, the laws are divided into two: *seera uumaa* (nature's laws) and *seera tumaa* (man-mad laws). The former originates from *Dhugaa Ganamaa* (Original Truth) through *uumaa*, *Waqaa,* and *Safuu*. The latter originates from Dhugaa Namaa (Relative Truth) through *Ilaa-fi-Ilaamee* – an Oromo philosophical mode of reflection and reasoning (Baba, 2015). *Seera Tumaa* has many categories including *seera namaa* (the law for men), *seera bulmaataa* (the law of governance), *seera rakoo* (the law of marriage and family), *seera yakkaa* (the law of crimes), *seera horii* (the law of animals, domestic and wild), *seera mukaa* (the law of plants), *seera hariiroo ummataa* (the law of human interactions), *seera saree* (the law of pets), etc. Each category of laws has sections but few easily memorable articles within it.

According to Oromo Oral tradition, there exists a universal body of the constitution and law of the Oromo that has fifty and five hundred articles respectively. Both the articles of the Gadaa constitution and the laws are memorized publicly in every assembly of the multitudes in a form of legal audit every eight years. These all articles are memorized by the *Abbaa Seeraa* (Father of the Law) and the *Hayyuu Guddaa*s (memorizers of the laws) of the Gadaa System. They are also handed from one generation to the other through oration. In addition to the universal laws, regional or local Oromo polities could make laws that apply to the local unique needs. These too are memorized as may be necessary and handed down to the younger generation through oration.

The profound understanding that once made, the law shall govern everyone equally, makes the Oromo are very enthusiastic about taking part in the law-making process and on teaching the laws to their children. Indeed, it is an obligation for younger Oromo men in the preceding Gadaa grades to *Luba* grade to know the laws in the process of developing their competence to win successive elections. By the time they reach *Luba* grade of the Gadaa System, they must have mastered the constitution and the laws. Every Oromo who has been through his Gadaa term would understand all the previously enacted laws. In effect, he would become a legal scholar. This

means that every Oromo who passed the marker of middle age, in effect, becomes a legal scholar. As a result, the law-making process is characterized by fierce debate among self-made legal expert and the experienced judges and prosecutors (*Abbaa Alangaas*) where the *Hayyuu Guddaa* takes the middle ground of facilitation of ideas and formulation of legal propositions. The laws that are made with the assembly of such scholars (*hayyuu*) and *Abbaa* Gadaas, no doubt, would be fair and acceptable. To ensure full compliance of everyone, all the laws are enacted in consensus after fierce scholarly debates in the legislative sessions of the assembly of the multitudes. The enforcement of the laws is universal. Once enacted, they are respected fully by everyone, including the *Abbaa Gadaa* and the *Qaalluu* leaders. All the laws apply to everyone equally and everyone is equal in front of the law. The laws also enter the legal oration of the Oromo in a way that they could be imparted easily to the next generation. One of the key pieces of knowledge that parents transfer to their children starting from an early age is the laws.

Because there is no exception as to the applicability of the law and the law is the result of remarkably cultured debate and made in unanimity, the Oromo have full confidence in their laws. The indiscriminate applicability of the law is one of the guarantors of the principle of *Qixxee* (equality of humans regardless of any distinguishing factor). Whenever transgression of the law takes place, it results in serious consequence that includes capital punishment. There is no one to pardon a transgressor. Also, no single person has the authority to guard or enforce the laws. Every able Oromo, particularly a *Raaba*, is expected to make sure that everyone respects the laws of the land.

Special institutional responsibility of implementing the laws, however, is vested in the offices of *Abbaa Alangaa* (national prosecutors) and *Abbaa Seeraa* (fathers of the law, judges). Holders of the two offices, *Abbaa Alangaa* and *Abbaa Seeraa* respectively, are elected to office for an eight-year single term. Local retired *Abbaa Gadaa* and *hayyuu* (usually those who have reached the *Jaarsa* age set) administer day-to-day justice according to the law in the traditional jury system known as *Jaarsummaa*. The adjudicators in the *Jaarsummaa* could be three, five, seven, or nine depending on the increasing seriousness of the offense and its corresponding punishment. In the case of minor and non-criminal offenses, the two parties to the case choose one judge each and the two judges to give their verdicts on the matter according to the law. Though rare, dissatisfied parties always have the right to appeal verdicts, including up to taking it to the *Caffee* of the polity. Serious cases of

the transgression of the law are always dealt with in the regular assemblies of the Gadaa Council or in a special assembly of *hayyuu* of the Gadaa. In those assemblies, serious punitive judgments are passed but only in unanimity.

The oral chronicles have preserved that the traditional Oromo justice administration system allows an extended appeal possibility even though cases that go to the end of the process have historically been exceedingly rare. If either of the parties to a legal case is not satisfied with the judgement, he/she may take the case up to higher assemblies of the multitude in a step-by-step procedure. The case, however, must warrant that it involves significant legal issues, including a fundamental error of law and absence of applicable law, to be accepted at a higher level. The appeal process must always begin at the lowest *Caffee,* which are fundamentally *gosa* assemblies. If the case involved parties from a local government in *Maccaa*, for example, from *Gudurun* Oromo, it would be taken to the local *Caffee* at *Qobboo*. If the appeal is not resolved satisfactorily at *Qobboo*, it may be taken to the contiguous *Caffee*, to the *Caffee* of *Horroo* Oromo at *Bulluq*. The two *Caffees* have equal authority and function as coordinate courts. This is the most common type of appeal. If the appellant is not yet satisfied, the case may be taken up at the *Caffee* of *Maccaa* at *Odaa Bisil*. The *Caffee* at *Odaa Bisil* would have the role akin to modern cassation division of the supreme courts with the final and binding decision within the extant of the laws. If the case required the enactment of a new law but not an amendment of the Constitution, the *Caffee* at *Odaa Bisil* may pass new law during its next regular session. Before doing so, however, it would have to consult with the adjoining *Caffee*. In this case, the consultation would be with *Caffee* of *Tuulamaa* at *Odaa Nabee*. Only cases that call for an amendment to an existing article or addition of a new article to the constitution may be presented to the pan-Oromo assembly at the mid-term of the Gadaa government.

The due process and the justice administration are implemented in an impersonated way and indecorum. It is an embedded culture among the Oromo that they disassociate the person of the defendant from the law he has broken. They deal with the impersonated action that broke the law and give a penal or restorative verdict so. The cases are always treated with the presumption that the person of the adversary could be anyone. This is the principle of judging not the person but only the specific action(s) of the person exercising utmost objectivity. The Oromo have a constant reminder of this principle: They have introduced physical constraint on litigants to

make sure that litigation is conducted with decorum: The plaintiff standing with one leg bent and leaning against a tree and the defendant sitting on the ground with one leg stretched out and the other tucked under it during the hearing in front of a judge or a jury (Legesse, 2006).

Historically, the hearings were conducted under a shade of a tree, oftentimes Sycamore tree, and it started and ended with prayer. Starting from the 16th century, the Abyssinians were jealous of the excellent administration of the justice of the Oromo. Atsme Giorgis regretfully noted that the Oromo delivered better justice than the Abyssinians in the 17th century (Tafla, 1987).

In Oromo society, all types of laws are made as relative truth through deep reflections that are influenced by their concept of primordial truth (*Dhugaa Ganamaa*) which has component parts of *Waaqa*, *uumaa*, and *safuu*. Being within these principles of *Dhugaa Ganamaa* the laws are made through "a philosophical mode of thought" known as *ilaa fi ilaamee* (Baba, 2015). The Oromo make *Seera Tumaa* (man-made laws) and respect *Dhugaa Ganamaa,* which forms the larger part of Oromo culture (*aadaa*).

The law is the most vital part of the Oromo daily life. The Oromo say, *"Oromoon seeraan bula."* It is to say, 'We, the Oromo, are governed by the law.' This aphorism designates their conviction to the supremacy of the law and their dedication to the rule of law. Making the law, thus, is the most important legal and political process.

There is no supreme body or person or class or exceptional jurist elite or ritual leader or patriarchal lawgiver or divine force or *Abbaa* Gadaa or *Qaalluu* or anyone or anybody else who is the source or who gives the *seera tumaa*. It can only be made by the deliberative *Caffee* of the Oromo. The only sources of the *seera tumaa* are the Oromo themselves. They have always made their laws in a deliberative process of equal participation of the Oromo in a *Caffee* of representatives and private citizens. The deliberations for making laws have been very thorough, farsighted, and highly disciplined, where wisdom and pragmatism are at the centre stage.

Any private national or any group, who has legal issues that could command the attention of the *Caffee*, has the right and the freedom to present it as a new legal proposition to regional Gadaa assemblies or to the preliminary sessions of the *Caffee*. The preliminary session of the *Caffee* takes time and due diligence to discuss the new legal propositions and recommendations that have been forwarded both through the regional session of regional Gadaa Assemblies and directly by private individuals or

groups. The sub-sessions of the preliminary session may take time (up to a month) to discuss the propositions before it reaches consensus to present them to the *Caffee*. There is no rush because it deals with diverse and sensitive legal issues with due diligence and care. This process requires great leadership in addition to knowledge of existing laws. After due deliberation, the preliminary session finalizes the accepted proposition into an orally presentable bill to be presented to the *Caffee*. Only then and after holding rigorous scrutiny and extensive debate and making sure that there were no objections, the *Caffee* may pass the bill into law by consensus. The new law comes into force at once.

The dedications of making the law are clear in the names the Oromo gave it to the process. The process of making the law is known as *"seera tumuu." Tumuu* is to pound or to hammer or to mill repeatedly, energetically, and thoughtfully expecting positively transformed results. Thus, it means hammering/pounding/milling out the law. It is clear from the name only that the making of the law is a rigorous and tedious process. Such laws are collectively known as *seera tumaa*, i.e., hammered laws, which can be referred to as man-made laws. The culmination of the *tumuu* process is *muruu*, "cutting" the law. That is when the "*tumuu"* (hammering/milling) process finally yielded a legal proposition, an article of law, to be presented for approval with a consensus by the *Caffee*.

It is only after a consensus was achieved that the legal proposition of *seera tumaa*, though it is "hammered" and "cut" may be passed. Before the proposition to pass the law is presented to the legislative assembly (the *Caffee*), a reasonable time is given to reflect on the final proposition. During this time, a point of concern that may motivate objection may arise.

In case such objection arises, a single objection by a rightful individual is enough to prevent the law from passing. The objecting party would only have to say, "*qabaddhe!*" (I have hold of it) to stop it. Then, the objection would be presented articulately to the *Caffee* to rekindle the legislative debate. Everybody must listen attentively until the objector finishes his objection, including taking moments during his presentation of the arguments or at the end of it. No interruptions are allowed in the deliberations of Oromo *Caffee*. They would prefer to take weeks, even months, to stay in the session of deliberations than allow the cost of chaos and destructions of interruptions in the assemblies. Only when the objector confirms to the chairperson that he had finished his arguments, others may speak. The objection must be

resolved by taking the time and discussing the objection in depth to satisfy the arguments of the objection. This process may take a long time, depending on the magnitude of the application of the law and the transformation it may bring.

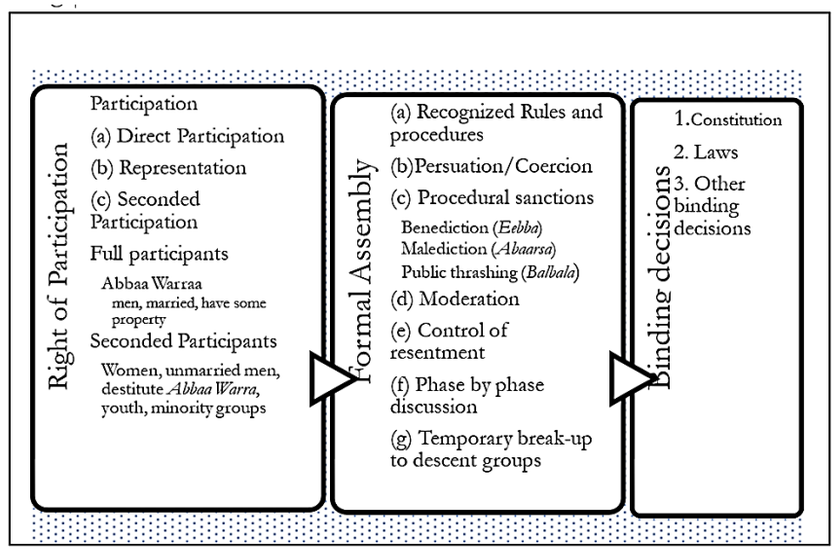


Figure 3.5. The Process of Gumii (Caffee) of Boorana Oromo

Note. Compiled based on Bassi (2005, Chapter 10, pp. 183–216)

Historically, the lengthy *Caffee* session had made the Oromo disposed to enemy attacks. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the enemies of the Oromo used this lengthy *Caffee* session of the Oromo to their advantage as recorded by Atsme Giorgis. Abyssinian war lards and its *Atses* used to wait and attack the Oromo when they were in *Caffee* for days or weeks sitting under tree shades and shooting their whips making, revising, and amending their laws (Tafla, 1987).

Once a consensus is reached, the article of the law is said to have been passed. At the critical moment of passing every article of the law, new or an amendment on existing law, the ground is struck by a whip in a token gesture of taking the laws up from the ground into the air to authority (*seera baasuu*) symbolizing its immediate enforcement on everyone and everywhere in the Oromo country. It was the predecessor of modern gavelling. Once the

Oromo passed the laws in consensus in such a way, they own them with great fidelity. The laws have immediate application, legitimacy, and protection. The laws of the Oromo command absolute fidelity.

The Oromo amend their existing laws in an equally rigorous process as when making new laws. If a group of Oromo (or even a private person) has proposed for a change of a particular law, the law could be changed or amended according to the established Gadaa constitution and applicable laws. The amendment, however, must pass through a similar process of making new laws. The *Caffee* first takes the article of the law down (*seera buusuu*), i.e., suspend it. *Seera buusuu* is the opposite action to *seera baasuu*. Only the national *Caffee* is entitled to suspend the Constitution (*heera*). It is the act of suspending the article of the law or the law in its totality. So long as the *Caffee* has not suspended the law, it is in full effect, including during the session of the discussion. The *Caffee* must first suspend the law to discuss it, amend it, or change it. The suspension would, however, be only for the duration of the deliberation. If consensus has not been reached shortly enough, for example during the day, the suspended law must be put back into full effect (*seera baasuu*) for the evening. The next morning, it may be suspended again. Once it is "put" down (*seerri bu'e*) (the law is brought down to the ground), the deliberative *Caffee* discusses it thoroughly. When the particular law is altered or reaffirmed or replaced or struck out with consensus, the new law or the change that has been made to the law is lifted (*seera baasuu*) by striking the ground with the whip: its coming to effect is immediate.

Before propositions of new laws are deliberated, the Oromo take an audit of the existing laws every eight years. The law-keepers, specially trained Gadaa scholars and the senior *hayyuu*, recount every law that has been in effect up until the moment of the beginning of the session of the national deliberative *Caffee*. They do so ceremonially by standing in front of the *Caffee*. Because an average Oromo person, usually male, knows the total number of the articles of the laws that have been passed and remembers their provisions, the keepers of the laws are under scrutiny. However, the law keepers (particularly the senior *hayyuu*) are highly trained scholars with the duty and responsibility bestowed on them to keep the law: they would make no mistakes. Most of Oromo law-keepers in history are known as greater orators and wicked smart memory geniuses.

As the laws are recounted one by one and article by article using their designated names, members of the *Caffee* would register their amendment propositions on the particular law by exclaiming "*Qabaddhe!*" just when it is mentioned. The *Caffee* would have to resolve these propositions for amendment or revocation on existing laws before deliberating on propositions for the new law.

Propositions for new laws are often few and far apart. They are oftentimes deliberated in the local assemblies and by the time they are ready to be deliberated by the national *Caffee*, they have already been in a good shape or, in other words, have already been partly hammered. The same may also be true for amendments to the existing law. However, because a consensus must be reached, the deliberation at the national *Caffee* may take an exceptionally long time.

Particularly when an element of culture (*aadaa*) is proposed to be elevated to a law (*seera*) it takes a lot of time and fierce legislative debate to reach a consensus. Because the Oromo have a unique clarity as to what constitutes *aadaa* and *seera*, crossing the boundary has never been easy. An *aadaa* may only be proposed to be part of the *seera* when it is proved to be harmful than useful and its harm must be prevented by making a law about it. Doing so however is both sensitive and difficult not only at the level of legislative deliberations and at reaching consensus to make it to the law but also at the level of its enforcement and at taking out that particular element of the *aadaa* immediately.

Without consensus of all representatives, who must be present, the Oromo do not make laws. They are aliens to the concept of majority and quorum. The Oromo believe in consensus and in full representation however difficult to achieve it.

Bringing the *Caffee* into consensus is the biggest challenge the *Abbaa* Gadaas and *Abbaa Seera* (fathers of Law) face. They achieve it not because of the absence of differences but because of (1) the moderate formulation of the law to be passed, (2) leadership skill of the *Abbaa* Gadaa to read into whether the minds meet on the final legal proposition, (3) inherent reconciliation and moderate behaviour of representatives, and (4) the culture of consensus and mutual trust among the Oromo.

In such august *Caffee*, every participant works towards achieving consensus according to the established conduct of the *Caffee*. Because there is no other alternative to pass a law other than in consensus, no participant

can have another alternative other than working towards reaching consensus. There is no majoritarian system in Oromo democracy, nor do there exist radical conservatives and liberalism.

In addition, their worldview that is centred on trust and truth and their ardent belief in *Waaqa* come to the help of the Gadaa leaders to achieve consensus. There is no place for smart play in the Oromo culture of deliberations, but deep reflection focused on achieving an elevated level of *dhugaa namaa* (relative truth). The Oromo have no presumption that another fellow Oromo, for that matter any other person, has an evil or hidden motive of engagement among them or with them. Their rule of engagement through their life is based on trust and truth only. This worldview is one of the underlying factors that help them to make laws and decisions in unanimity. Moreover, because they strongly believe that *Waaqa* is always with them and among them, they are very honest with each other as much as they would be honest with *Waaqa*. As an affirmation of this belief and *Waaqa* is with them and they are within His guidance, as during all other Oromo meetings and other Oromo assembly sessions, the sessions of the *Caffee* are opened and closed with a prayer to *Waaqa*.

The laws of the Oromo, whether they are pan-Oromo, moiety, sub-moiety, or local clan or lineage level laws are made not by a single leader or group of leaders or the *Abbaa* Gadaa but with the deliberative assembly. Nevertheless, historically there were *Abbaa* Gadaas who have made notable contributions in the law-making process. The well-known such *Abbaa* Gadaas are *Dawwe Gobbo* and *Gadayyoo Galgaloo* of *Booranaa; Haruu Marruu* and *Cangaree Korphe* of *Tuulamaa;* and *Makko Bilii*[4] of *Maccaa*. However, they were neither patriarchs with the power to both formulate and give the laws single-handedly nor divinely inspired. They were, simply, Gadaa leaders at the time remarkable laws were made.

3.7. The Democracy of the Gadaa System

How democratic is the Gadaa System? To answer this question reasonably, it would be necessary to first mention, though briefly, features of modern democracy, and emphasize the fact that Gadaa Democracy (Oromo Democracy) exists today. Then, it would be proper to continue to discuss what kind of democracy Gadaa democracy is in general. Providing a full

explanation of the Oromo democracy is beyond the scope of the present work. Our modest attempt is to introduce Oromo Democracy through an explanation of its core democratic principles and institutions.

Very briefly stated, features of modern democracy includes but are not limited to (a) sovereignty of the people, (b) rule of law, (c) limited government, (d) freedoms, rights, equality, and dignity of the people, (e) system of representation, and (f) free, fair, and frequent elections. These may be summed into constitutionalism, democratic practices, and liberties. Gadaa System has incorporated these features; in some cases, better than the Western democracy does. The following section offers a partial comparison.

3.8. Gadaa Democracy and Western Democracy: Some Comparisons

Gadaa Democracy has all the key features of modern democracy. The sovereignty of the people, rule of law, limited government, freedoms, rights, equality, and dignity of the people, a system of representation, and free, fair, and frequent elections are part of the Gadaa System. In Gadaa democracy, the Oromo are sovereign: they have no king or master. No one is above the law. The Oromo have been making laws that governed all of them equally since the invention of the Gadaa System. No leader they elect could stay in power for more than a single term of eight years. They have constituted this limited office term, at least as early as mid-15th century CE, during the Gadaa of the fathers of *Gadaa Jibbenaa* (1450-1458), according to Abyssinian records and at most since 1000 BCE according to their most prevalent oral traditions. The elected leaders have limited, separated, and distributed powers. The powers are limited to institutions that stand in check and balance to each other. The Oromo had instituted this political mechanism centuries before the same practice emerged in the USA in the late 18th century. State powers are separated into legislative, executive, and judiciary; and distributed both horizontally and vertically. The distribution is both along with traditional power structure and along Gadaa-specific social and political structures. Unless the Oromo restrict their freedoms and rights with their free will for the common good with the laws they make, every Oromo has all the freedoms and the rights. Gadaa Democracy is based on the principle of equality of not only the Oromo but also all humanity. The dignity of the

people is ensured with the laws and with the very purpose and goal of the Gadaa government. In Oromo democracy, representation of the people is ensured through the representation of every social hierarchy (moiety, sub-moiety, *gosa*, etc.), and the age-sets and the generation-sets. Gadaa Democracy is a democracy of membership of all the citizens because every Oromo belongs to a Gadaa party. Every Oromo belongs to one of the naturally balanced five parties throughout his lifetime. His decedents also belong to the same party: party membership is hereditary. Furthermore, the Oromo are stratified socially into balanced oppositions. Fair and free elections are held within every party at different Gadaa-grades every eight years.

Gadaa System has stratified the Oromo society into layers of cross-cutting institutions. These cross-cutting institutions include the dual-moieties, two genealogical generations, five parties, eleven Gadaa-grades, and eleven age-sets. Every male Oromo belongs to one of these institutions, and one of its categories at all points in his lifetime. The roles and responsibilities of every member of the system are articulated clearly at every stage of life and the membership grades.

Gadaa Democracy has more advanced elements that have already solved some of the problems of modern democracy. These include balanced opposition of parties, balanced social stratification, and vertical distribution of powers across age-sets, Gadaa-grades, and generation-sets, balanced representation of clans, consociationalism in national decision making, and polysepalous government. The following section highlights these advanced democratic elements of the Gadaa System.

3.8.1. Election, Election, and Election

The Oromo are habituated to elect their political, social, cultural, and military leaders for eight years term of office because of the Gadaa System. Except for spiritual leadership, only a democratic election establishes leadership at every level and across every structure. Age-set leaders are elected. Clan (*gosa*) councilors are elected. Members of the Elders' Council are elected. Representatives of the people are elected. Representatives of the non-governing parties (oppositions) are elected. Representatives of villages are elected. Representatives of neighborhoods are elected. Organizers of grassroots social, environmental, economic, ritual events are elected. Leaders of the clan army are elected. Leaders of the age-sets warrior regiments are

elected. Leaders of the *Luba* army are elected. In Oromo polities, not only all the Gadaa leaders are elected but also all the representatives of every social or political group are elected. Except for the hereditary *Qaallua*, no one has the fiat to represent others in Oromo societies without their expressed consent in a form of vote.

3.8.2. Balanced Opposition of Parties

In addition to the check and balance that is integrated into the three branches of the ruling Gadaa Council, the Gadaa System has an institutional structure for balanced opposition. Balanced opposition is instituted in the Gadaa System by forming a reasonable five naturally balanced parties that compete democratically. These five parties are known commonly as *Gadaas* though they are also known as *gogeessa*[5] (permanently casehardened).

The five parties have distinct names, focus, and central ideology. Historically, the parties are known as *Malbaa, Muudanaa, Kiilolee, Biifolee, Michillee* for the generation of the fathers; and *Harmuufaa, Roobalee, Birmajii, Mul'ataa, Duuloo* for the generation of sons[6], respectively. Each of the parties has had its flagship focus areas and core policy that are represented by the symbolism they have enshrined in some parts of the Oromo country. Perhaps it was based on these flagship focus areas and core policies that the ideologies of the five Gadaas are oriented. Among the Maccaa Oromo, they form "five natural governments: first that of men and reason; second that of flowing water or progress; third that of sheep or quietude; fourth that of lion which represents strength; and finally fifth the government of vulture which presides over pillage" (D' Abbadie, 2007 [1880], p. 125). Similarly, Sirna (2012) and Legesse (2006) hold that these "five natural governments" are embedded in the five parties of the *Boorana* Oromo. It is highly likely that the same has been universal among the Oromo nation.

Political party membership is universal in the Gadaa System. All the newborn Oromo are born to one of the five Gadaas. They inherit the Gadaa of their father. They begin the journey in the Gadaa System going through the first five Gadaa-grades until they would become *Luba* themselves exactly forty years after their fathers in the sixth grade. The perpetuation of these forty years of generational hemicycle with five Gadaa-grades distributes the membership of the newborn into naturally balanced five parties. Ideal "right

born" children play a key role in the fair distribution of the members of the party across the Gadaa grades.

Unlike no other political system, membership in political parties is naturally random among the Oromo nation. Membership in the Gadaa parties is as random as the natural birth of the people. It is controlled more by nature than by men. This makes Gadaa parties (*gogeessa*) remarkably diverse in demography. The "late born" and "early born" also join their respective Gadaa parties though they belong to different age-sets than the "right born." This by itself makes each party diverse in terms of age distribution. Besides, the mandatory membership in one of the five parties is free from kinship relationships. Members of the same moiety, or *gosa*, or clan, etc. may belong to any of the five parties. Even a father and a son belong to two different generations of the same party.

More importantly, the existence of these five deeply rooted party systems has structured the Oromo polity into five constructively opposing parties: the parties compete only to do better for the nation. The main goal of the opposition is also to help the party in power does its best for the common good according to the Gadaa constitution and laws. Such fair competition and constructive opposition among the naturally balanced parties have nurtured the Oromo democracy continuously.

More uniquely, there is an inbuilt opposition and competition within the parties and between the parties. Each of the five parties has two divisions known as *Cooraa* and *Hoboo* among some Oromo communities.[7] In other words, every party has two sets of generations, the generation of the fathers and the generation of the sons. Both have the right to set up a *luba* and govern the polity for eight years. If the *luba* of the generation of the fathers is *Cooraa*, the *luba* of the generation of the sons is necessarily *Hoboo*. *Cooraa* and *Hobboo* may be understood as progressive and conservative tendencies within the same party. Or even though the father and the son belong to the same party, internally they might uphold opposing political ideologies. In other words, if the Gadaa of the generation of fathers is more leftwing, the Gadaa of the generation of the sons would be more rightwing. In effect, the father and the son are in internal opposition. Stated otherwise, the party is internally opposing itself. This means, even though the sons join the party of their father, the *luba* of the fathers and the *luba* of the sons shall remain in an interlocked balanced opposition to each other. Similarly, consecutive parties are oppositions to each other while alternating parties are allies. These

relationships between the parties are known as *Qadadduu* and *Walaanaa,* respectively.

The system of cross alignment of the generation of the Gadaa of the fathers and the generation of the Gadaa of the sons within one party serves two purposes: One, maintaining progressive and conservative dynamism within every party. Two, preventing abuse of power by the governing *Luba* by introducing check and balance within the same party so that all the Gadaa of the fathers and the Gadaa of the sons stand in opposition, not in collusion. This means, though the same party is elected to power after forty years based on the succession of the parties, its ideological orientation would be different.

How the Oromo came to the decision of limiting the number of parties to five and the term of office to eight years in antiquity is not known nor does there exist a political explanation on why they limited the term of office to one only and to eight years. It is however not difficult to understand that this radical constitutional decision had been the result of political evolution in the Oromo polity. It must have taken the Oromo exceedingly long time to come to this perfection. Since the time of the inception of the Gadaa System, the Oromo seem to have been convinced the five naturally balanced parties are the most reasonable number of parties the Oromo nation can have and the eight years of the term of office is the most optimal period of a government for any polity. This belief is an integral part of their political thinking.

3.8.3. Balanced Social Stratification

The Oromo are stratified into two junior and senior *mootii*, balanced kinship structures commonly referred to as a dual moiety system since recently. In Gadaa System, *mootii* means one-half of the nation that forms an autonomous society at a sub-national level but is still complementary to its other half at the national level. Because of the lack of understanding of the very meaning of *mootii* and its application within the Oromo socio-political structure, there had been some confusion on the understanding of the Oromo polity (Legesse, 2006). The problem could be resolved only after the equivalent definition of *mootii* appeared much later as moiety. It is now known: the meaning of moiety is "one of two equal parts of a whole"

("Moiety," n. d.). This has been the exact meaning of the word in *Afaan Oromoo*.

Moiety system is one of the foundations of the Oromo social organization. The concept of "moiety" (*mootii* in *Afaan Oromoo*) has been in practice among the Oromo since the ethnogenesis of the Oromo nation or at least since the invention of the Gadaa System. The Oromo had been using it before the term appeared in the Western anthropological dictionaries. Dual moieties existed among all Oromo communities of Ethiopia before the second half of the 19th century. Since then, Abyssinian-centered mono-national and monocultural nation-state building projects of the successive governments strove to destroy it for about a century. But it survived. Though it is not easily traceable among some communities at present, particularly among the communities where the *Qaalluu* institutions have been weakened or destroyed, the dual moiety system is still a functioning social stratification mechanism among most of the Oromo communities.

Because the meaning of the moiety was not known until very recently, it took time for social anthropologists to figure out the basic structure of the Oromo society that is founded on the very concept that was not known to them. Anthropologically, moiety refers to one of the two halves of society. Accordingly, the dual moiety system of the Oromo refers to the foundational dual structure of the Oromo society. The Oromo society is divided into two proportional halves. The highest level of this social stratification is the moiety system. The two higher-level moieties are *Booranaa* and *Baarentuu*. These are the two halves of the first moieties of the Oromo nation. These two halves are replicated further throughout the Oromo nation. The *Qaalluu* institution is organized along with these replications. The *Qaalluus*, in addition to being ritual leaders, are heads of the moieties. They head every replication of the *Booranaa-Baarentuu* first dual moiety system.

It is, however, important to note that there are variations on the system of replication or rebuilding of the Oromo moiety system waiting for research to clarify it. For now, whether the replication was made exclusively within the *Booranaa* and *Baarentuu* first moieties or with combinations from both is less clear. There are strong suggestions for both. According to Asafa Jalata (2012), the *Booranaa* first moiety is replicated in *Maccaa-Tuulamaa*, *Raayyaa-Asaboo*, and *Sabbo-Gonnaa* while the *Baarentuu* first moiety is replicated in *Ituu-Humbanaa* and *Siiqqoo-Mandoo*. Asmarom Legesse (2006), on the other hand, provides an elaborate suggestion for the dual organization of the moiety

system from a parallel combination of *Booranaa* and *Baarentuu* first dual moieties. He suggests that replication and/or rebuilding of Oromo societies from "Boran" and "Barettuma" first moieties into "Tulama", "Orma", "Macch'a", "Barentu", "Borana", and "Arsi" with respective dual moieties of "Salgan Borana"-"Torban Barentuma", "Irdida-Barettuma", "Boran"-"Gabaro", "Ania"-"Qallo", "Gona"-"Sabbo", and "Sikko"-"Mando" (Legesse, 2006, p. 176)[8]. Similarly, though it is not clear to which first moieties they belong, *Garbaa* are organized into *Jiblo* and *Lossa* moieties (Schlee, 2008). These sub-moieties and more[9] are divided further into balanced halves of junior moieties. These junior moieties also have sub-junior moieties, and the replication is believed to have continued.

This balanced social stratification of the whole nation into the dual organization of exogamous moiety systems (*Qaalluu* Institution) has helped the Oromo in creating an effective social balance and a democratic government. The Gadaa and the *Qaalluu* institutions, as does the *Hiriyaa* institution, crosscut the Oromo society. Membership in one moiety or any of its sub-moieties does not affect political membership to the parties and vice versa. Thus, friendly competition and social check and balance between the two non-political halves of the dual social stratification system emerge naturally. Balanced social stratification is the foundation for the formation of the dual parallel kin structure[10] in the Gadaa System where every local, regional, and national Gadaa government unit are structured in such a way that it is composed of two balanced moieties at sub-moiety, junior moiety, and first moiety levels respectively. Furthermore, it has guided the geographical distribution and the settlement of the Oromo moieties, *gosa*, lineage, etc. across the Oromo land. Within the apolitical social stratification, the political competition among the five parties crosscut the society. The Gadaa government that is based on the dual moiety system further stratified the Oromo polity into a balanced party system, generation-sets, and age-sets.

3.8.4. Vertical and Horizontal Distribution of Powers

Gadaa democracy employs principles of a balanced representation of all the social stratifications as well as persons, age-sets, Gadaa-grades, and generation-sets. Power-sharing is institutionalized throughout the age-sets,

Gadaa-grades, generation-sets, and all levels of administrative organs of the Gadaa government to prevent any individual or group to amass too much power. No one person or group has the monopoly of state power, even when elected to the top office.

In the Gadaa System, state power is distributed horizontally along the mature Gadaa-grades and age-sets of all *gogeessa* (political parties). This involves the sharing of power among the established five parties during a given Gadaa period. Power is shared among the *gogeessa* during one Gadaa period based on their respective Gadaa-grade. When a party is in power, only its *Luba* is in power; more specifically, it is the elected *Abbaa Gadaas,* its *hayyuu Adoolaa*, which has the state power. During the first half of the rule of *Luba* of *Malbaa*, for example, the *Raaba* of *Muudanaa* oversee law enforcement and upkeep of peace and order in the form of community policing and prosecution of offenders. During the second half, however, they become the Gadaa intern (apprentice) attached to the *Luba* (Gadaa) of *Malbaa* where they share apprentice power and exercise limited aspects of the overall governing role. In the meantime, the *Raaba* of *Kiilolee* takes over the law enforcement and upkeep of peace and order during the second half of the Gadaa of *Malbaa*. The *Qondaala* of *Biifolee* hold their election campaigns during the first half of *Gadaa Malbaa*. At its middle, they elect their *Hayyuu Adoolaa*. During the second half, they become *Kuusa* and focus more on acquiring economic assets: they would become an economic powerhouse of the Gadaa economy. During the same time, the *Michillee* become *Qondaala* and start the formation of their *Hiriyaa* and *Adoolaa* Councils and the election campaign for both. The Gadaa government of *Malbaa* delegates some powers and oversees the active engagement of the second half of the *Qondaala* of *Biifolee* and the first half of the *Qondaala* of *Michillee* in (1) criticizing and praising the Gadaa government and its *Abbaa Gadaas*, (2) taking part in the *Buttaa* ceremonies and wars, and (3) participating in labor-intensive public works. The governing party also shares power with the *Yubas* of the remaining parties. They serve in the governing Gadaa Council, particularly on the opposition Council, *Garbaa*. Members of the *Garbaa* Council may share selected executive offices of the Gadaa government with the governing *Hayyuu Adoolaa*. In such a way, powers are shared among members of all the five parties horizontally along the Gadaa-grades during the Gadaa of one of them. Similarly, even though the age-sets and Gadaa-grades are overlapping in most parts, the prerogative

power of the governing Gadaa is shared systematically among the five parties along the age-sets horizontally.

Also, powers are shared vertically between the genealogical generations. In addition to the horizontal share of power among parties based on their stage in the progressive Gadaa grades, powers are also shared vertically within a party. This governs the power relationship between fathers and sons. The generation of fathers has significant power over the generation of sons until the sons form their families at the end of *Kuusa*/beginning of *Raaba* grade and become sovereign. Such powers are however more social and cultural than political. And their effects are indirect than direct.

Also, power is distributed vertically along with the dual-moiety structure, i.e., kinship structure (see *Figure* 3.6). In the Gadaa System, the source of authority and power is the people. The people delegate limited and measured of state power to the elected Gadaa leaders. The retained powers are kept within a vertical kinship structure. Every major social stratum (moiety, sub-moiety, junior moiety, clan, sub-clan) keeps power for its internal self-administration. The retained power is distributed hierarchical: it follows a kinship decent structure. In addition to the hierarchal distribution of the retained powers of the people (state power), the official administrative powers of the government are also distributed vertically throughout the kinship structure. This is effected through the mechanism of the auxiliary Gadaa Council, a form of 'shadow government,' composed of two Councils, known as *Kontoma* in *Boorana*, representing the two balanced dual moieties of the polity. The councilors are elected based on the kinship dichotomy: hence, they are partisans. The two partisan councils form a parallel and balanced vertical power-sharing. The partisan structure flows vertically downwards to the grass-root level: so, does the vertically distributed power.

By enabling the creation of separate political entities with equal powers while supporting one pan-Oromo nation, Gadaa System has distributed the state powers horizontally among all its polities. Because of its federal/confederal structure, the Gadaa System has a highly decentralized power structure that facilitates the horizontal distribution of powers. The pan-Oromo government is at least a federation and at most a confederation. Every member, which is an almost fully autonomous regional polity that has several local polities in itself, has the power to act independently within the provisions of the oral Gadaa constitution. The higher polities have equal powers: power is distributed among them equally. They may be likened with

member states of modern Federations that have equal powers or with member states of the European Union. The Confederation of *Maccaa* and the Confederation of *Tuulamaa*, for example, have the same powers but under the *Maccaa-Tuulamaa* higher Confederation, which is under *Booranaa* Confederation, which in turn is one-half of the *Boorana-Baarentuu* Confederation, the pan-Oromo nation.

Gadaa System also has extended horizontal distribution of state powers at the local government level. Power is shared horizontally through the mechanism of separation of powers. The legislative, the executive, and the judiciary powers have been separated in the Gadaa system since it entered recorded history in the 16th century. It is highly likely that the separation of powers was there from the very beginning of the system, which oral traditions suggest was centuries before the Common Era. The assembly of representatives of the people, *Caffee*, holds the legislative power. The elected Gadaa Council holds the executive power. Traditional judges, including Council of Elders, Council of retired *Abbaa Gadaa*s, and retired Gadaa Councilors, hold the judiciary power. For very exceptional cases, particularly when there had been a gap in the law or it involves the need for highly regarded reconciliation the *Caffee,* the Gadaa *Council*, ritual experts, and the *Qaalluu* may be involved in the process of administration of justice and the moral and social reconciliations. The traditional court system of the Oromo is known as *jaarsummaa*, the elders' court.

The three branches of government have the structural vertical distribution of state powers. The distribution of the state power, however, has not been as articulate as in modern democracies. This has been due to the absence of modern civil service and career bureaucrats. Volunteers and conscripts makeup up the lower state bureaucracy of the Gadaa System. Even so, the distribution of the three powers was effective to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the Gadaa government based on the existed traditional administrative structure. There was this traditional but republican Gadaa administrative structure and bureaucracy before the invention of modern bureaucracy that employs a significant part of the population.

The legislative power of the assemblies of the representative is present wherever there are assemblies of representatives. The scope of their legislative power is however limited to the polity or the entity that they stand for. Accordingly, legislative power is distributed vertically in descending order from pan-Oromo assembly through higher assemblies to the local

assembly. Under the local assembly, there are lower vertical assemblies of sub-moieties, *gosa* (clans), sub-clan, lineages (*qomoo*), and a cluster of extended families (*warra*) and crosscutting horizontal assemblies of age-sets and Gadaa-grades. These lower and crosscutting assemblies could make laws or rules that apply only to their membership groups without prejudice to the laws made by the local *Caffee* or any higher *Caffee*s. Historically, the assemblies of *Qondaala*, *Kuusa*, and *Raaba* used to make some laws that govern only their members (*miseensa*) for eight years. Similarly, the assemblies of the *gosa* (clan) used to make laws that apply specifically to the members of the *gosa*.

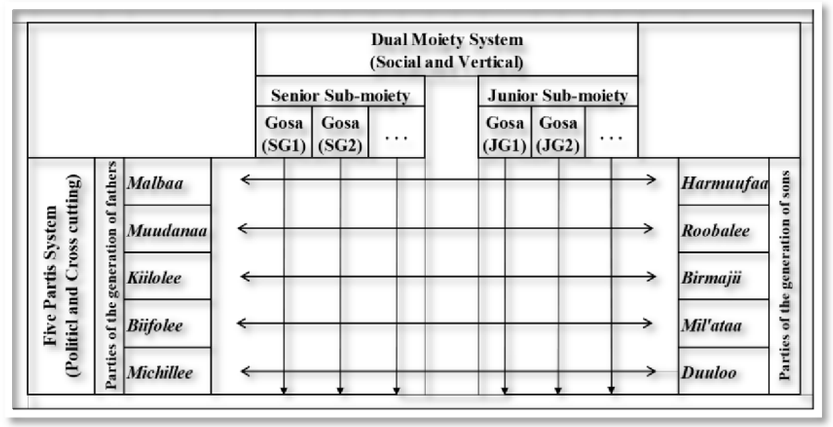


Figure 3.6. Vertical and Cross-cutting structures of Gadaa System

In addition to the horizontal distribution of the executive powers into the regular thematic (ministerial) executive powers under *Abbaa Sa'aa, Abbaa Dubbii, Abbaa Duulaa,* etc. the executive power is distributed vertically along with the traditional administrative structure. The traditional administrative structure of the Gadaa System includes the offices of *hayyuu gosaa, abbaa aanaa, abbaa gandaa, abbaa ollaa* in descending order. These offices can have as assistants as may be necessary to coordinate thematic executive actions across each level of the structure that they stand for.

Similarly, the judiciary power is distributed both horizontally and vertically where Courts of Elders (*Jaarsummaa*) administer justice at all levels of the traditional administrative structures. Such courts of equal authority serve as co-ordinate courts. The plaintiff or the defendant is free to take their case to a higher such court or the court of another clan within the polity or

even to another neighboring Oromo polity in case either of the party was dissatisfied.

Such cases, however, must be exceedingly rare among the Oromo because of three reasons. First, the two parties agree on the judge or both sides choose members of the jury. This and the fact that the judge (the jury) is from the local community who are highly respected for their knowledge of the laws and administration of justice, and are familiar with the context of the case at hand, makes it very difficult to reject their judgments. Second, in the Oromo justice system, the petitioners, the judges, and the community focus on overall reconciliation. As a result, they are extremely thorough not only on the judgment of punishment but also on considerate social and moral reconciliations. This makes it hard for the parties to expect any better justice and reconciliation. Third, in the last one or two centuries, some Oromo communities, the *Maccaa* and *Tuulamaa* in particular, have developed the culture of taking their litigations to spiritual leaders, the *Qaalluu*, who recruit resident legal experts to administer justice. The faithful Oromo people consider verdicts of the judges at the halls of the *Qaalluu* as final because of the prayers, the rituals, and the invocation of the spirit involved. In the rarest case where cases could not be resolved satisfactorily at any of the courts nor by the Gadaa Council, the "Supreme Court" was the *Caffee*.

It is worth mentioning that the Gadaa System also has a gender-based division of power. Through *the Siiqqee* institution, women secure power on domestic issues and their rights and freedoms. As Gadaa is for men, *Siiqqee* institution is for females. It is however not as elaborate and as advanced as Gadaa System is. Nonetheless, it allows married Oromo women to exercise limited powers independently of men. Besides, it allows them to be part of the exercise of political and social powers exercised by the men, their life partner (*rakoo* husbands), or members of the family. This is however not to undermine the fact that the Gadaa System is inherently male-oriented (the male head of the family is sovereign) and it has vast room for improvements.

This is however without prejudice to the fact that both the man and his wife exercise the power of the Gadaa System by consulting with each other even though power is vested expressly on the man. There is an exceptional circumstance where the wife of *Abbaa Bokkuu* ("father" of the *Bokkuu*) could become *Haadha Bokkuu* ("mother" of the *Bokkuu*). D' Abbadie (2007 [1880]) asserts:

> If a chairman of an Oromo assembly dies in the exercise of his duties, the *bokku* passes to his son; and if he has not left a son behind, the wife of the deceased then holds the *bokku* [become *Haadha Bokkuu*] and proclaims the law. (p. 130)

In summary, the Gadaa System has distributed state powers along the age-sets, Gadaa-grades, generation-sets, and across the social stratification and traditional administrative structure. In doing so, it allows every Oromo man to take an active political, social, economic, juridical, ritual, and administrative role in the Gadaa government at every reasonably mature age. It does so by allowing gender-based and vertical and horizontal distribution of powers. It is hard to imagine today that the Gadaa System had done these, at least, since half a millennium ago, from when there exists a written historical record.

3.8.5. Balanced Representation of Kinship

In addition to the balanced social stratification and horizontal distribution of powers across the age-sets, Gadaa-grades, and generation-sets, Oromo democracy complimentarily instituted balanced representation of all kinships that have also resulted in a balanced representation of lineages, regions, and confederacies in the Gadaa government. Even as of the present time, after so much of social integration, assimilation, and deliberate attempt of the Abyssinian-centered government to dismember the Oromo from their kinships particularly during the past century, the number of kinships is more or less balanced in the social stratification.

Based on this balanced distribution of kinships and their geographical distributions, the Gadaa democracy allows the kinships to have representations in the Gadaa government both at the national, regional, and local levels. As a result, there could be no single dominating kinship in the government, and there could be no minority kinship such that the clear majority might expose it to domination. Because of the balanced representation, all members of the Oromo kinship structure have been able to take the local power from one another competitively through elections that give them the democratic right to self-administer locally and at the regional level more or less alternatively taking the Gadaa leadership.

Furthermore, in every Gadaa government institution, Gadaa democracy ensures the representation of kinship either as *Abbaa Gadaas* or as councilors. No kinship member is left out at any level of the Gadaa government or Gadaa institutions. Membership to a Gadaa party is independent of kinship and other mechanisms of social stratification. Kinship has nothing to do with membership to a party; members of the same kin could be members of a different party. Membership to a party is determined initially by random birth and has continued to be inherited generationally by the sons from their fathers. Regardless of their kinship, the Oromo can also become members of the same party.

When one party becomes the governing party, its members become *Luba*. They become so regardless of their kinship. They become *Luba* of all kinships, and the Gadaa government that they form becomes the government of all the Oromo. Every Gadaa government is a random representation of every kinship structure. Every Gadaa government is accepted as the government for all and of all the Oromo in the polity.

3.8.6. Staggered Succession

In Gadaa Democracy, there is an inbuilt safety mechanism against the risk of power vacuum during the power transfers. In principle, all the elected members of the governing party who are in power leave office, and the elected executives of the succeeding party take their places every eight years. This would be a total change of government exactly at the time of the transition of the *Raaba* to *Luba* and the *Luba* to *Yuba I*, which must take place at the same time. Also, all the Oromo men would move from one Gadaa-grade and age-set to the next age-set and Gadaa grade at this same time. If all changes take place at one time, it could result in sudden disruption or abrupt failure of government because of sharp transition: brusque power transfer caries political risk of government failure.

Realizing this political risk, the Oromo have introduced a form of succession to the power that would not allow the power vacuum or abruption or collapse of the government. They have introduced a staggered succession system as one of the remedies. The other remedy, which shall be discussed later, is the institution of the shadow government and executive power-sharing practiced among *Boorana* Oromo.

Even though in principle, every Gadaa-grade has an equal duration of eight years, due to the need for a staggered succession system, the duration of two of the grades is altered. The *Raaba*-grade is extended to twelve years of three classes (see *Figure 3.7*) where the junior class of the succeeding party overlaps with the senior class (*Raaba Doorii*) of the preceding party and the *Yuba I*-grade is shortened by half to four years. In effect, the Gadaa-grade is moved forward by four years (see *Figure 1.6, Figure 1.8, Figure 3.7,* and Table 3.1). The *Raaba Dorii* stays in this grade usually for five years among the *Boorana* Oromo (Bassi, 1996; Legesse, 2006) and for four years among most of the other Oromo polities (see Table 3.1). During these five or four more years, the prospective *Abbaa Gadaas* of the succeeding Gadaa prepare and stay on standby to take power from the governing *Luba*. The five or four more years of stay in this Gadaa-grade would be off-sated with corresponding four or three fewer years of stay at the *Yuba I* grade. In the rest of the Gadaa-grade, the eight years of stay at the Gadaa-grades remains intact.

Table 3.1

Duration of Gadaa-grades in a four year and a five-year staggered succession

Gadaa-grades	Age-sets (Ideal "right born") Regular	Age-sets (Ideal "right born") Staggered	Duration Regular	Duration Staggered
Dabballee	0–8	0–8	8	8
Ittimakoo	8–16	8–16	8	8
Qondaala	16–24	16–24	8	8
Kuusa	24–32	24–32	8	8
Raaba	32–40	32–44(5)	8	12(13)
Luba	40–48	44(5)–52(3)	8	8
Yuba I	48–56	52(3)–56	8	4(3)
Yuba II	56–64	56–64	8	8
Yuba III	64–72	64–72	8	8
Yuba IV	72–80	72–80	8	8
Gadamoojjii	80–88	80–88	8	8

Note. Bassi (1996, p. 152) and Legesse (2006, p. 227).

The *Karrayyuu* Oromo practice a slightly different staggered succession system than that of the *Boorana*. In the Gadaa government of *Karrayyuu*, the

governing party does not only trains the prospective *Abbaa Gadaas* but also shares with them some of the actual government power during its last two years in office. The governing *Abbaa Gadaas* hand over limited state powers to the prospective *Abbaa Gadaas* of the succeeding party in an elaborate public ceremony known as *Gooba* (empowering) ceremony, also referred to as *Tarree Luugoo*. The symbolic use of *gooba* (hump of the shoulder of a bull) implies a shouldering of responsibility. In this context, it means "emboldened," "empowered," "ready," etc. in *Afaan Oromoo*. As a noun, it refers to the humped shoulder of a bull. The public ceremony is full of rituals and festivities: It lasts for two weeks. It takes place every eight years at the place known as *Tarree Luugoo*. It is a ceremony where the present *Abbaa Gadaas* transfer half of their power to the "shoulders" of the prospective *Abbaa Gadaa* to help them learn to shoulder the responsibility of administration and leadership. The 74th *Gooba* ceremony of the *Karrayyuu* took place in the second half of December 2016.

<table>
<tr><td>The year of Caffee /Mid-term evaluation of the governing Gadaa/ lallaba (proclamation) of</td><td colspan="2">*</td><td colspan="2">*</td><td colspan="2">*</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Incoming Gadaa/party</td><td colspan="2"></td><td colspan="2">Regular Raaba</td><td>Senior Raba
Raaba Doori
Junior Gadaa
Dooroma</td><td>Regular Gadaa</td><td>Senior Gadaa</td><td>Yuba I</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Kuusa</td><td colspan="3">Raaba</td><td colspan="2">Gadaa</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2"></td><td>Junior Rabaa</td><td colspan="5"></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Outgoing Gadaa/party</td><td colspan="2"></td><td>Senior Raaba</td><td colspan="5"></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Raaba</td><td colspan="2">Gadaa</td><td>Yuba I</td><td colspan="2">Yuba II</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Regular Raba</td><td>Senior Raba
Raaba Doori
Junior Gadaa
Dooroma</td><td>Regular Gadaa</td><td>Senior Gadaa</td><td></td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>The year of baallii/bokkuu</td><td colspan="2">#</td><td colspan="2">#</td><td colspan="2">#</td><td colspan="2">#</td></tr>
<tr><td>Years</td><td colspan="8"></td></tr>
</table>

Figure 3.7. Classes of Raaba & Gadaa in a staggered succession

In both cases, staggered succession helps to develop better leadership. By the time the elected *Abbaa Gadaa* from the *Raaba Dorii* (*Luba* in waiting) take office, they would be well prepared to lead the nation effectively starting from the moment of the transfer of power because of the staggered succession system. By then they would have had the opportunity to share

experience, gain an insight into the internal workings of the Gadaa government, and tested through the exercise of some actual authority in progression over the years. These progressive coaching and practical transfer of leadership and administrative skills through the actual transfer of some of the powers and the testing on the actual exercise of it (as it is done among the *Karrayyuu* Oromo) provides many opportunities to the succeeding party. It helps the *Luba* of the party learn the art of leadership in general and its elected *Abbaa Gadaas* to learn both the art of effective and efficient leadership and the administration of the Gadaa Government and its institutions. It also helps the elected *Abbaa Gadaas* to articulate their own political, social, economic, cultural, environmental, and ritual goals that they want to achieve for the nation during their tenure pragmatically.

In summary, the leadership training that they have been receiving since they were elected *hayyuu Aduulaa* at *Qondaala* grade, the preparations they make during the staggered succession and/or the years of experiences that they acquire from being coached by the governing *Abbaa Gadaas* and by being tested by the exercise of the partially transferred powers under the watchful eyes of the governing and the semi-retired *Abbaa Gadaas*, would make the prospective *Abbaa Gadaas* highly prepared and satisfactorily experienced for the highest office of their land by the time they would take over full state powers.

3.8.7. Gadaa Leadership Review and Internal Party Evaluation

The Oromo have full authority over the leadership they elect. The national, regional, or local Gadaa Council has a one-term only eight years of the lease of power. No *Abbaa Gadaa*, under any circumstance, can lead for more than eight years. During these eight years, the people have the sovereign right to make the *Abbaa Gadaas* answerable to them for any violation of the constitution or the laws, or the customs and the culture, or the norms and the rituals that have been rooted in the way of life of the Oromo and the Gadaa lifestyle. They do so within the frames of the rules of law, Gadaa democracy, and the Gadaa constitution. The Oromo would only need to request the *Caffee* through the Gadaa check-and-balance institutions to appraise and critically assess the current leadership.

A system of appraisal and reassessment of the leadership of the Gadaa government is constituted in the Gadaa democracy. The public has the right and the opportunity to evaluate the leadership of its *Abbaa Gadaas* at any time when necessary. Most commonly, however, the appraisal and reassessment (leadership evaluation) are conducted at the three key grades of the Gadaa leadership: at the beginning before taking Gadaa offices, in the middle after serving half of their eight years tenure, and at the end when they were about to transfer power. Among the three, the necessary and the most common one has been the mid-term evaluation. A mid-term evaluation of the *Abbaa Gadaa* leadership is inevitable. It is a requirement of the Gadaa democracy. It is instituted in the Oromo democratic practices to be conducted every eight years. It takes place exactly at the mid-term of the limited eight years office term of every Gadaa government.

The mid-term public evaluations are held at all levels of the Gadaa Government, and it is conducted according to the constitutional norms of a deliberative assembly (*Heera yaa'ii*). The *Abbaa Gadaas* report to the local, regional, and national assemblies all the successes and failures, challenges and opportunities, mistakes, and transgressions of the Gadaa government in the past four years. They do this openly and honestly. It is a form of confession. The public makes note of the achievements compared to their election promises and goals. At the same time, the public evaluates the leadership for any breach of laws, *aadaa*, and *safuu*. They also compare the achievements of this Gadaa thus far to that of the earlier Gadaa. Through this process, which may take weeks, (even months) the assembly remains in session at the *Caffee*. Towards the end of such a lengthy session, the *Caffee* forms a general opinion about the leadership that would be used as the basis for the vote of confidence and specific issues that necessitate action by the *Caffee*. The *Caffee*, through the purposely elected chairs of the *garee* (team) that have investigated specific issues of concern, in its turn presents the praises and the appreciation, the dissatisfaction and the concerns, and the punitive and legislative propositions in an objective manner.

Setting a single common objective of achieving better solutions for the identified issues of concern and problems of the Gadaa government, the *Caffee* strives energetically to strike the best solution in unison through discussions, rational arguments, and philosophical debates. The *Caffee* debates each of its propositions and decides on every one of them separately with utmost clarity. If the *Caffee* finds out the *Abbaa Gadaas* have broken laws, and

such that the laws were broken intentionally and its actual or potential damages were significant, it shall remove the responsible *Abbaa Gadaa* from office. The *Caffee* may also curse the *Abbaa Gadaa*, as it was in the case of *Halakhe Doyyo* (1745–1753) of *Boorana*, to remove him from office (Legesse, 2006). Depending on how damaging the transgression was, the *Caffee* may pass more severe decisions. One illustrative example of such a severe decision by the *Gumii* (*Caffee*) of *Boorana* has been documented in history: *Abbaa Gadaa Walee Waccuu* (1722–1730) and his councilors were not only removed from office but also exiled and excommunicated (Legesse, 2006).

If the *Caffee* evaluates that there existed a loophole in the law, or a new law is required to fix the identified problem, it would enact a new law during the same assembly session. If the *Caffee* evaluates that the Gadaa leadership needed more experienced Councilors (*hayyuu*) to assist, more resources, more facilities, or more support from other branches of the Gadaa government, it would resolve within the available means. In doing so, the Oromo conduct the mid-term public leadership review of the *Abbaa Gadaa* and the Gadaa government. Similar approaches and processes are followed at the national, regional, and local Gadaa (Gadaa government) levels but in a staggered timing, as the higher assemblies require the representation of all the lower assemblies when they conduct their mid-term evaluations

In addition to the public evaluation, the *Luba* themselves conduct internal peer evaluation in their respective *Luba* Councils. This is an evaluation within the governing party.[11] In this council, all the *Luba*[12] evaluate the leadership performance of the *Abbaa Gadaas* that have been elected from among themselves to the Gadaa Office. The focus of this evaluation is not to remove the elected *Luba* from office or to punish them. It is to help them perform better as the leaders of the Oromo nation by pointing out the areas of weakness leading to failure and areas of opportunities leading to bigger successes. The evaluation may first assess the general social and political mood towards the Gadaa government. The criticism for failure, however, stays sharp, open, objective, and honest. Because the failure of the elected *Abbaa Gadaas* would be seen as the failure of all the *Luba,* and it cast a dark shadow on the Gadaa of their children, all the *Luba* have a stake to help their elected peers to succeed at least with the measure of common standards, if not able to achieve remarkable and historic success.

What every governing party in Gadaa democracy fears the most is earning a bad reputation. Once earned, a bad reputation could last for

generations in the Gadaa democracy. This hate and fear of lest the governing party may earn a bad reputation by itself serve as one of the strongest driving forces of the governing party to strive to achieve comparatively better. Achieving just a little above the bar earns the party significant reputation. Thus, providing relatively better public service, efficient administration, effective leadership, efficient enforcement of the laws, the legislation of more and better new laws, achieving better peace and security, achieving better social mobilization for socio-economic activities, and achieving a better level of *finna* become the conviction of the governing party. Achieving any better than the standard however is difficult because of the naturally balanced party membership, balanced opposition, and balanced social stratification and kinship representations systems that have pushed the Oromo democracy to the edge of ultimate efficiency.

However, it has already become extremely difficult for any of the five parties to excel one another in a measure that could earn them a better reputation that would last for generations. This is because of centuries of refinement of the Gadaa government. The common standard is already set too high. Instead of aiming for excellence, greater number of parties could incline to strive not to fall short of achieving the common standard. Every *Abbaa Gadaa* who has achieved the common standards during his term of office is said to be successful (*oofkale*); by consequence, the party from where he has been elected is also said to be successful.

3.8.8. Polysepalous Government

In the Gadaa System, a single person never holds power. The sovereign Oromo, male heads of households, have always held the highest authority in the Gadaa System. They form assemblies. The *Caffee* (assembly of the representatives of all sovereign Oromo in the political entity) is the highest authority. Part of this authority is delegated to the elected *Luba*, *Abbaa Gadaas,* who hold the office of the Gadaa government for the lease of eight years. The highest government office has however always been vested not to a single individual but a Council of elected *Abbaa Gadaas*, known as *hayyuu Aduulaa*. The Council usually has a minimum of six *Abbaa Gadaas.* Each of these *Abbaa Gadaas* can have as many advisers as necessary. The Gadaa government that they form governs as a Council within which each of the members has equal power. The *Abbaa Gadaa,* the chair of the Council, has

only the privilege of calling and chairing the Council meetings, the *Caffee*, and the current Gadaa government of eight years. He may also have the privilege that the Gadaa government named after his name to make a nominal distinction. He is neither a king nor a tyrant nor a lawgiver.

Several *Abbaa Gadaas* organized in a form of elected members of the Gadaa Council head every level (local, regional, and pan-Oromo) of the Gadaa government. The Council acts and passes decisions within the framework of *Aadaa* (customs and culture), the Gadaa Constitution (*heera*), and the laws (*seera*) only unanimously and without any one of them having more or less power than one another. Furthermore, the governing Gadaa Council has two supporting and one opposing Council. Two deputy *Abbaa Gadaa*s head the two supporting Councils. The opposing Council is further divided into three and attached to the governing and the two assisting Councils. Accordingly, Gadaa democracy has instituted a "polysepalous" (multi-headed) government (Legesse, 2006). This multi-headed system of government has characterized Gadaa democracy as consociationalism.

3.8.9. The *Qaalluu* as Civic Organization

Gadaa System has constituted the separation of state and religion. The two are represented by the office of *Abbaa Gadaa* and *Qaalluu,* respectively. The constitution has set a clear path for the occupants of the two high offices: the office of the *Qaalluu* is occupied by hereditary descent for a lifetime while that of the *Abbaa Gadaa* is attained through a democratic election only for eight years. The First *Abbaa Gadaa* of the Oromo nation (the Chairperson of the Councils of *Abbaa Gadaas* of the nation) is the highest *Abbaa Gadaa. Abbaa Muudaa* is the highest *Qaalluu*.

The *Qaalluu* are neither priests nor do they intercession between *Waaqa* and *Waaqeffataa.* The relationship between *Waaqeffataa* and *Waaqa* is direct and personal. It needs neither temples nor priests nor scripture nor tithes nor contributions but animate and inanimate manifestations and prompts of *Waaqa* in the daily chores of the *Waaqeffataa.* The role of the *Qaalluu* is primarily spiritual guidance. Beyond making opinions, voicing concerns, and observing elections as civil society institutions, the *Qaalluu* have only ritual and ceremonial roles in the Gadaa government. The constitution prevents the major *Qaalluu* clans of the Oromo moieties from taking part in elections or from taking the office of the first *Abbaa Gadaa* themselves. This is to

prevent the concentration of religious (hereditary) and socio-political (democratic) powers in the hands of a single entity of the society.

This principle is also manifest in the separation of the *Qaalluu* institutions from the Gadaa institutions. The *Qaalluu* institution is structured in such a way that every Oromo lineage that constitutes a polity, at all levels, has its own *Qaalluu*. In other words, the *Qaalluu* are the apolitical foundations of the Oromo dual-moiety organization, the basis for Oromo social stratification. Gadaa institutions are structured in such a way that every Oromo polity has a representative assembly at every level, every member of the Gadaa System belongs at a time to one of the five parties, one of the eleven Gadaa grades, and one of the eleven age-sets, and one of the two genealogical generations and power is transferred peacefully every year following a democratic election of the leader, *Abbaa Gadaa*. The *Abbaa Gadaa* does not interfere with the affairs of the *Qaalluu;* neither do the *Qaalluu* interfere in the affairs of the Gadaa government. The constitution, the laws, and customs (*aadaa*) prevent them. Both are, however, "coordinates institutions" (Legesse, 2006, p. 102). Besides, both are subordinate bodies of the assembly of the multitudes, *Caffee*. Furthermore, the two have always been interdependent on the issues of peacebuilding, reconciliation, and rituals.

Nowhere is this separation between *Qaalluu* and *Gadaa* clearer and enforced at present than among the southern *Boorana* Oromo. Among the *Boorana*, the *Odituu* clan of the *Gonna* sub-moiety is barred from taking part in the election because they are the senior *Qaalluu* (Chala, 2017). Similarly, the *Abbaa Gadaa* from *Karrayyuu* clan of *Sabbo* moiety is barred from taking the office of First *Abbaa Gadaa* and becoming the leader of *Arbooraa* Council, the highest authority in the *Boorana* Gadaa System. This is because the *Karrayyuu* clan holds the office of the *Qaalluu* of *Sabbo* sub-moiety of *Boorana*. The *Karrayyuu* lineage "is not allowed to hold the leading position in the Gadaa office in order to avoid any concentration of power in the hands of the clan" (Chala, 2017, p. 13).

The Gadaa constitution and the laws govern the *Qaalluu* institution. They have discrete prerogatives only on the custody and interpretation of natural laws, some religious, cultural (*aadaa*), customary and ritual rules related only to spiritual aspects of life that have not been included under the jurisdiction of the Gadaa government. *The Qaalluu* leaders, including the head of all the *Qaalluus* (*Abbaa Muudaa*), place much emphasis on the Gadaa

constitution and laws than on the policies of the Gadaa leaders. They encourage the people to resist any unlawful impositions by the Gadaa government or Gadaa leaders. They promote accountability for the leaders and respect of the rights, freedoms, and liberties of the people at all times. They stand firmly against authoritarianism and oppression. Unlike religious institutions in the West, which have historically sided with the absolute monarchs that they helped install on the thrones, the institution of the *Qaalluu* serves as a civic organization standing with the people, not with the government or the Gadaa leaders.

3.8.10. Representation of Opposition Parties in the Ruling Gadaa Council

The Gadaa government has an elaborate set of institutions commonly referred to as the three pillars of the Gadaa government. These three pillars are the subunits of the governing Gadaa Council of the Gadaa government. They are the executive, the advisory, and the opposition sub councils (also known as the senior, the auxiliary/shadow government, and the opposition councils). (As discussed above, they are known as *Arboora*, *Meddhicha*, and *Garba Councils* respectively among the *Boorana* Oromo. For more, see the discussion under sections 3.3.2.6 and 4.4.) These three sub-Councils, together, form an Executive Council of the Gadaa government. In such a way, the Gadaa Council of the governing party not only incorporates the opposition (all the non-governing party in general) as an institutional part of the governing Council, but it also constantly engages in full-time consultations and shrining of expertise and experiences from the non-governing party. The tripartite and triangulated constant legal and policy debates among the *hayyuus* (scholars) of the *Arbooraa* (executive), the *Garbaa* (opposition), and the *Meddhicha* (auxiliary/advisory/shadow government) sub-branches of the Gadaa Councils of the governing Gadaa could only lead towards the success of the Gadaa government and the utmost satisfaction of the people.

3.8.11. Consociationalism in Public Decision Making

In Gadaa Democracy, a simple majority could pass no national decision. The Oromo are not familiar with the simple majority, fifty percent plus one (50% + 1), the system of Western democracy. The Oromo, in general, does not support the idea that simply because the number of people is in favor of a decision proposal, therefore it must be taken. The Oromo believe that if a law or an administrative decision offends or disappoints a single sovereign Oromo, it is not yet the best law or the best administrative decision. Based on this belief, the Oromo people look at the decision proposal not from the point of view of who supports it but from the point of view of who opposes it. They work hard on resolving any dissatisfaction through the adept and intellectual process of smoothing propositions, polishing the final statement to be offered for consensus to arrive at the best decision. They are careful to avoid rewarding the simple majority of those who support a proposition immediately at the dissatisfaction of the reasonable minority who oppose it.

In Oromo democracy, every decision is made only after reaching a consensus. The Oromo take as much time as necessary and debate ideas and issues until they are convinced that they had reached a consensus: no Oromo is reasonably dissatisfied with the decision and openly stood against it. This applies to both making new laws and revising existing laws, declaring war or peace, and making every decision of national or regional importance. All Oromo assemblies of multitudes (national, regional, local *Caffees*), all assemblies of the Gadaa Councils, all assemblies of moieties, sub-moieties, junior moieties, clans, lineages, etc. operate in the same principle: no consensus, no decision.

Even though reaching consensus takes lots of time, energy, and ultimate leadership, the Oromo have always given what it takes to maintain unanimity in national decision-making except on very few historically regrettable occasions. These were, first, in the early 17th century when some northern and central Oromo communities rallied behind *Atse* Susenyos of Abyssinian and engaged in a civil war among themselves; second, in the early 19th century, when some western *Booranaa* Oromo (the *Maccaa*) abandoned Gadaa and established Oromo monarchies; third, in the late 19th century when some central Oromo communities were tricked by some prominent Oromo leaders and joined the expanding Kingdom of Shewa (Abyssinia) against their people.

Compared to the Western democracy, where the tyranny of the simple majority has helped minority political elites and influential wealthy individuals to dictate their terms to the government, thus leading the state with proxy, the Oromo democracy ensures equal participation of citizens and consensus-based decision making at every level of government where the whole nation decides what is best for everyone with all-satisfying concessions without being outsmarted and falling into serving the interest of anybody or any group.

3.8.12. A Comprehensive Federal Democratic System

Gadaa Democracy allows a decentralized self-administration in a form of regional and local Gadaa governments because of the very nature of the Oromo to avert concentration of power in the hands of a single individual or few persons (Baissa, 2004). The *Boorana* sub-moiety federation, where powers are diligently distributed between the central (Gadaa government) and constituent units (clan councils), is a form of cooperative federalism (Chala, 2017).

Similarly, the major sub-moiety confederacy of *Afree* (*Hookkoo, Challiyaa, Guduruu, Liiban*) and *Sadachaa* (*Suba, Obboo, Hookkoo*) of *Maccaa*, the *Sadacha* Confederacy of *Walloo* (*Warra Karrayyuu, Warra Iluu, Warra Noolee*), the three confederations of *Gujii* (*Uraagaa, Maattii, Hookkoo*), the *Tuulamaa* confederacy (*Caffee Galaan, Fooqa Hawaas, Balloo Bachoo, Birbirsa Xiyyaa Soddoo*) (Chala, 2017), and the less researched *Arsi* confederacy (*Mandoo, Siikkoo*), the *Afree* Confederacy of *Qalloo* (*Noolee, Alaa, Babillee, Oborraa*), the *Ituu* confederacy of *Galaan* and *Kuraa*, etc. are some form of loose federations that have existed at least since the end of 16th century under the single Gadaa government and Gadaa laws but with varying autonomy and degree of self-rule, some of them having the legislative power to make laws about their unique needs. These confederacies had their legislative assemblies and assembly centers (*Caffee*) that were independent of the central and the regional Gadaa Councils but loosely remained under the central Gadaa government, the Gadaa constitution, and the central Gadaa laws and the single *Abbaa Muudaa* (*Qaalluu* institution).

In line with this historical and widely acknowledged existence of loose confederacies among the Oromo, Dejene Gemmechu Chala, in his recent empirical study that has looked into the inner functioning of the *Boorana* Gadaa System, not only found out that "the Borena [*Boorana*] federation is a typical Oromo federation in its adherence to relatively intact Gadaa rules," but also concludes that, "Gadaa system with all its unique features has a federal structure" (Chala 2017, pp. 9, 18).

In the Oromo federation, the national power is devolved and spatially decentralized from the central Gadaa government to confederacies. The confederacies are autonomous through their regional, local, and clan councils who have had the autonomy of self-administration under the umbrella of the Gadaa constitution and the common Gadaa laws. Because of such spatial decentralization of power, Gadaa System is a federal democratic system. The Gadaa governance of the nation is equally functional and democratic at the national, regional, and local levels.

Reporting this political reality from the past, Lemmu Baissa (2004) writes:

> Gadaa government comprised a hierarchy of triple levels of government: the national, the regional, and the local. At the pan-Oromo level, the national government was led by an elected *Luba* council [National Gadaa Council] formed from representatives of the major Oromo moieties, clan families and clans, under the presidency of the *Abbaa Gadaa* and his two deputies . . . The national leadership was responsible for such important matters as legislation and enforcement of general laws, handling issues of war and peace and coordinating the nation's defense, management of intra-Oromo clan conflicts, and dealing with non-Oromo people. (p. 101)

The National Gadaa Council (sometimes referred to as *Kaa'oo* Gadaa) is a confederation. It is a pan-Oromo Council. It may delegate part of its powers to the regional or local Gadaa Councils according to the law. However, the regional and the local Councils are independent of the National Council in most of the functions of the Gadaa Government. Indeed, they have more power for policy execution than the national government. The local Gadaa Councils are independent Councils representing an autonomous polity with legislative power but under the Gadaa constitution. The federation or confederation of the local Gadaa Councils set up the regional

Gadaa Councils. The local, regional and national Gadaa Council lead the Oromo nation as one Gadaa highly decentralized government, as a form of the loose federal government or as a confederation.

3.9. Some Limitations of Gadaa Democracy

As do all forms of political system known to humanity, the Gadaa System also suffers from limitations. These limitations have been exaggerated in the Abyssinian-centred literature because of biases driven by religion, politics, and typical Abyssinian attitude of deflation what they covet it was theirs. Western scholars have also exaggerated the faint weakness of the Gadaa System by evaluating the ancient system, which they had no cultural competence to understand fully, against recent advances in socio-political thoughts. The following are the main weaknesses of the Gadaa system.

3.9.1. Less Political Participation of Women

Historically, girls and unmarried women have been given less attention compared to boys and married men in the Gadaa System. Women, in general, have been excluded from the Gadaa-grades and political powers of the Gadaa government. Their political participation has been through the presumed representation of their husbands. This is because the Gadaa System confers sovereignty to the head of the household, who is the representative of all members of his family for political participation. This, however, does not mean that women (married women) do not have any influence on the Gadaa government. When her husband becomes *Abbaa Gadaa*, she becomes *Haadha* Gadaa. It is also likely that *Haadha* Gadaa becomes *Haadha Siiqqee* ("mother" of *Siiqqee,* i.e., head of the *Siiqqee* Institution).

The influences of women on the Gadaa government come in two forms: through their influence on their husbands and the institution of *Siiqqee*. An Oromo wife, particularly the *rakoo* wife is equal to her husband in every right in the household. An Oromo man cannot become *Luba* or *Abbaa Gadaa* without a wife. His wife would be an equally important partner in every ritual. She is always his ritual complementary. The couple would have paired

political and social roles. However, there was a tradition of the shared role that a wife manages home affairs while a husband manages public affairs. He stands for her in the public political debates. This, however, does not mean she would not be accepted to the public assemblies in his absence or at her wish. It simply is a customary practice that men have more primacy to attend public assemblies than women. She stands for herself in the public in *Siiqqee* institutions, where men are not allowed.

Even though the girls and women have been excluded from Gadaa-grades, and unmarried women still have a less unclear position in Gadaa System, the fact that a man and his *rakoo* wife have been equal, theoretically, in the eyes of the law and have had an intuition to enforce her rights and privileges according to the law since many hundreds of years before the introduction of the universal right of suffrage of women, suggests how advanced the Gadaa System was. On the other hand, the fact that women do not have the right to participate in the election of Gadaa leaders directly indicates that it is high time to reform Gadaa System to allow both women and men to have truly equal political rights.

3.9.2. "Right Birth"

The Gadaa System prescribes that children should be born in a short window of eight years when their fathers are between their *Daannisa* and their children's *Maq-baasaa*. In a four-year staggered succession to power, this would be between the age of forty and forty-eight for an ideal "right born." The logic of the prescription is clear: it is to prevent the tip out of the instituted balances. As more children are born early, they become *Luba* at an older age, and as more children are born late, they become *Luba* at an early age. In other words, if children were not born at this "right time" they would not only miss the opportunity of being elected to the highest Gadaa office but also distort the balances within the parties and between the parties. After a long time, these could threaten the Gadaa System itself.

As of now, however, the Gadaa System interferers too much in the personal freedoms and life plan of the Oromo by prescribing only a small time window of eight years for "right birth" and by discriminating between children based on the time of their birth in a way it can have a lasting psycho-social effect on them.

3.9.3. Hereditary Party

Yet another limitation of the Gadaa System is that party membership is, in principle, hereditary. One is born to his father's party (Gadaa). The parties have established outlooks, policies, and agendas. One is born into the party to continue these outlooks, agendas, and policies. Even though the parties are not radically different, and one can change his party, doing so has never been approved socially. Hereditary party membership provides a sense of stability, purpose, and predictability of the socio-political system. It, however, limits the freedom of choice[13] of the citizen.

3.9.4. Early and Niche Nominative Election

The formal election of *hayyuu Hiriyaa* takes place in the first round of elections at the end of the *Qondaala* grade of the Gadaa System. This is when "right born" members, who have the prerogative to be elected, are twenty-four years old, at most. Thus, it is an early election. Though it is only a nominative election, it is highly competitive. Yet, by then, not so much could be known about the leadership potential of the candidate. The elected *hayyuu Hiriyaa* would be groomed for the highest office of the polity for a total of twenty years until inauguration as *hayyuu Arboora*, the core of the ruling Gadaa Council. This might be good for the orderly succession and overall stability of the political system. But many political and policy changes may take place between the time of the first round of election and the investiture. The content and the character of the candidates might also degenerate. Besides, the election is a peer election: only members of the *Qondaala* grade can elect their leader. Thus, it is a niche election, very narrow in scope. The masses are excluded from the election until the second round. In the second round of the election, which takes place sixteen years after the first round of election (see *Figure 1.5*), the kinship-based electorate choose three Gadaas out of the six candidates, leaving the choice of the First *Abbaa Gadaa* to the sub-moiety or *Gosa* which has the established conventional turn to supply *Abbaa Gadaa*.

3.9.5. Lack of Sufficient Written Records

Heavy reliance on oral chronicle is one of the limitations of the Gadaa System. It assumes that laws are learned better by heart and traditions and rituals by practice. This assumption had done away with the importance of developing a written record. It might be one of the contributors to the fact that the Oromo nation, until very recently, was not a bookish society. Perhaps because of this assumption, today, the Gadaa System lack well-organized and rich written records.

The assumption may have worked perfectly before the advent of written constitutions and laws. During those days, Oromo oral chroniclers, *ayyaantuu*, memorizers of laws, *Abbaa Gadaas*, elders, and concerned citizens preserved and handed over all that had existed to the next generation orally. They had done this, at the very list, for centuries. Now, the time has changed, and so do the modes of preservation and transfer of knowledge, including constitutions, laws, history, traditions, and rituals, among others. An array of methods of preservation of the past is available to humankind in this 21st century.

One of these methods is writing. All that can be written have started to be preserved in those formats and taught to students in school and higher learning institutions. The Oromo no more afford to rely only on oral literature for anything. It is time to systematically record – in writing – the knowledge about the Gadaa System and start teaching about the Gadaa System in formal schools and research about it in colleges and universities.

3.10. Summary

Gadaa System predates American classical democracy and republicanism. The Oromo had been governed by the republican Gadaa government for hundreds of years before the emergence of the American republican form of government. By the early 16th century, the Oromo had full-fledged popular democracy and republican form of government, which they call *Sirna* Gadaa (Gadaa System). The ideological foundation of their governance system encompasses many highly advanced concepts, including equality (*qixxummaa*), sovereignty (*birmadummaa*), freedom (*walabummaa*),

unity (*tokkummaa*), total peace (*nagummaa*), total egalitarianism (*wal-qixxummaa*), and peaceful co-existence (*wal-dandeettii*).

Gadaa government has been a government by the people, with a clear separation of state powers. In the Gadaa System, the ultimate power lies with the pan-Oromo *Caffee*. Only this *Caffee* could make national laws, declare national war or peace, and remove the Pan-Oromo Gadaa government from office in case of proven transgression of the Gadaa Constitution (*heera*), laws (*seera*), culture (*aadaa*), or *safuu*. Elected *Abbaa Gadaa*, who also serves as head of the polity (state), chairs the *Caffee* and proclaims the laws. The governing powers are in the hands of the Gadaa General Assembly. It is the assembly of the governing party. It is represented by the elected *Luba* Council whose members occupy the offices of the government. The Council has delegated power throughout the eight-year term of office of the party. Elected *Abbaa Gadaa* is head of the Gadaa government. The powers of the Gadaa government are separated into executive, legislative, and judiciary like in advanced modern democracies.

Gadaa is an overly complex concept. It conveys scores of meanings within multiple contexts to the Oromo. It may mean a grade, a period, an age-set, a generation, a political party, a rite, public office, legitimate state power, laws, a council, an institution, a democracy, a holistic system, a socio-economic development, a civilization, a way of life, a chronology, a history, a philosophy, a method of distributing authority and responsibility, a form of government, a form of sanctity, an ideology, a system of peace, and a state.

It may also be defined in multiple ways by emphasizing or deemphasizing one or more of the above concepts. As a result, there exists no single universal definition of Gadaa or Gadaa System. Nonetheless, one may define the Gadaa System unpretentiously. It is a multi-layered form of a democratic and egalitarian political system that has been constituted by the Oromo nation based only on the free will of the people where one party becomes the governing Gadaa for eight years in a regular cyclic succession of the five established parties and only the elected *Luba* take the office of the *Abbaa Gadaa* at the local, regional and national Gadaa governments that have separation of power as modern advanced democracies.

The Oromo have a very advanced tradition of making laws judiciously and abiding by them uniformly. Historically, the Oromo have made their laws, including their Gadaa Constitution and laws governing pets, only in consensus after debating for weeks or months in their *Caffee*. Their oral

tradition holds that they have made fifty Constitutional principles and five-hundred-fifty laws. All their laws are above men, below *Waaqa* (God). Yet, they are subject to reviews every eight years.

Gadaa democracy not only fulfills fundamental elements of modern democracy but also has some advanced elements that are not quite common in modern democracies.

- In the Gadaa System, there exists balanced opposition among all the five parties, between consecutive parties, and within the party. All parties have randomized equal membership, one-fifth of the polity. They also have equally competing party policies. As a result, every party stands in balanced opposition to the other party. Besides, the governing party always stands in opposition to its predecessor and successor. Furthermore, even though the father and the son belong to the same party, every genealogical generation stands in opposition to each other, i.e., they are oriented as oppositions by design.
- In the Gadaa System, society is stratified into a balanced dual moiety system. The two compete positively to advance the interests of the Oromo. The system has also assisted in the orderly expansion of the Oromo and the incorporation of other peoples into Oromo polity. The dual stratification appears to have been replicated throughout the Oromo country.
- In Gadaa System, in addition to the traditional distribution of powers in modern democracies, power is distributed vertically along with the dual moiety structure and horizontally through the age-sets, Gadaa-grades, and generation-sets (genealogical generations). It also has distributed power based on gender. This has enabled every Oromo to have active socio-political roles at every stage during his life.
- Balanced representation of kinships exists not only across the moieties but also across the parties. Hence, the Gadaa government always ensures a balanced representation of kinships at every level of government and in every intuition of the Gadaa System.
- Staggered succession to state power between the incoming and outgoing *Luba* ensures a smooth and orderly transfer of power. According to Legesse (2006), the staggered succession of the Gadaa government produces better succession than the American staggered election cycles.

- There is a Gadaa leadership review in the middle of the Gadaa government by the *Caffee*. There is also an internal leadership review of the governing party. This has been the tradition at least for more than half a millennium. In case the review reveals serious transgressions, the leaders, including the *Abbaa Gadaa*, may be removed from office. The process and the culture of doing so are more advanced than the impeachment proceedings or the no-confidence votes of modern democracies.
- Gadaa government is a polysepalous government. *Abbaa Gadaa* governs by a supreme Council (*Aduulaa*) of between five and nine members where each has equal voting and veto powers that force a decision to be made only in consensus. This is consociationalism at work. Also, the *Aduulaa* Council has three separate councils headed by the three *Abbaa Gadaa*s
- Politics and religion are separated by law and by tradition. They do not interfere in each other's affairs. The hereditary *Qaalluu*, who have no role in politics, serve as the civic society and Gadaa election observers. Unlike some modern organized religions, the *Qaalluu* institutions do not meddle in the affairs of the Gadaa government directly or indirectly.
- Gadaa government allows the representation of opposition parties in the governing Gadaa Council. The retired Gadaa forms an auxiliary (advisory) Council while the rest of the parties form an opposition Council. Even though both have no executive power, they could continuously reflect on actions and policies of the governing Gadaa, and hence may influence it towards their interests.
- Gadaa System is an antithesis to majoritarian decision-making. The idea of a simple majority is extraneous to the Oromo polity. All the national decisions, including laws, are made in consensus. They practice consociationalism in national decision-making.
- Gadaa System is a comprehensive federal democratic System. The local, regional, and national Gadaa governments and Assemblies of the nation are fundamentally federal and confederal arrangements ties together with the Gadaa Constitution, Gadaa Laws, and common identity of the Oromo nation.

The Gadaa system has minor limitations. These include less political participation of women compared to men, the assumption of "right birth"

of children that constrains parent to beget "right born" children within the designated window of eight years around mid-life, hereditary party system where the son inherits the party of his father, very long period, two decades, between the election and taking state power, and lack of sufficient written records.

Chapter 4

Gadaa System in Practice: Past and Present

4.1. Introduction

Broadly speaking, the Gadaa System is an integrated political, social, legal, military, and cultural system of the Oromo nation. As a political system, it is an advanced democratic, egalitarian, and republican system with a clear division of responsibilities and powers among its officials, its institutions, and its branches of government with an instituted vertical and horizontal distribution of state powers and leadership responsibilities. As a legal system, it is an exercise of popular lawmaking that allows the people to make laws that govern them equally, free and fair administration of justice, universal application of the rule of law, community policing and communal crime investigation, the practice of legal and constitutional dynamism where citizens have the opportunity and the privilege to review the laws and the constitution every eight years. As a social system, it is a mechanism for effective stratification of society to age-sets, generation-sets, *moiety*, *sub-moiety*, *gosa*, *warra*, and *balbala*, etc. As a military system, it is an effective age-sets and Gadaa-grades based military training, regimentation, mobilization, and deployment. As a cultural system, it is a combination of political and religious rituals, communal Thanksgiving and prayers, festivals and passage rites, and

spiritual leadership and trust in *Waaqa*. It is however best known as a socio-political system.

The Gadaa System is however not a simple system., particularly to outsiders. It is exceedingly complex. It has marveled every non-Oromo since the time a partial account of it first entered a written record in the 16th century. The complexity of the System, the intellect of the people who invented it, the "unlikely" people among whom it is found, and the "unlikely" place where it has been practiced for many centuries have been beyond the comprehension of the non-Oromo who came to realize how highly advanced Gadaa System has been. Also, because of the advancement and refinement of several cross-cutting but highly synchronized socio-political ideas in the Gadaa System, some Western scholars could neither be convinced that an African indigenous democracy had spear-headed the Western political enlightenment, nor could they fully comprehend it. Gadaa, as "one of the most astonishing and instructive turns the evolution of human society has taken" (Legesse, 1973, p. 50), has never been easy for anyone to fully understand it without an extra effort. It may only be understood fully with lifetime experience by being part of it. Because of a lack of full comprehension of the System, those who have ventured to write about the system, being outsiders to the Oromo community, oftentimes did injustice to the system as well as to the inventors of the system.

It is a fact that, throughout their recorded history, the Oromo have been governed by Gadaa System – a "unified egalitarian political, social and legal institution" (Hidoto, 2010, p. 31). The Oromo never had any undemocratic political system throughout their known history. The only political system they have known since their ethnogenesis from the ancient Empire of Kush, probably around 14th century BCE, until their settler-colonization by the Abyssinian kingdom in the late 19th century CE is the Gadaa System.

Gadaa System had existed as an indigenous democratic republican system among the Oromo of Horn of Africa before the emergence of a democratic form of a national government in the USA and Western Europe. By the beginning of the 16th century, Gadaa System had advanced check-and-balance political mechanisms in place, where powers were transferred periodically every eight years, and division of powers among the executive, legislative, and judiciary was institutionalized (Jalata, 2004). The Oromo were practicing a generational-grade form of government where elected Gadaa officials led the government of the Oromo by the sixteenth century (Marcus,

1994). The loose egalitarian Oromo society had been divided into exogamous moieties where the people identified themselves as members of moieties, Gadaa classes, clans, and lineages (Marcus, 1994).

The Oromo were governing themselves with popular democracy and republican form of government that could contend with the Western democracy of the 21st century before the discovery of the Americas. Gadaa System had "organized the Oromo people in an all-encompassing democratic republic even before the few European pilgrims arrived from England on the shores of North America and only later built a democracy" (Holcomb 1991 cited in Jalata, 1999, pp. 112–113; 2004, p. 12; 2005, p. 82; 2012, p. 131). The American classical democracy that emerged in the late 18th century and presently perceived by many as the pioneer republicanism was practically the shadow of the ideals of the Oromo democracy that preceded it at least by several centuries. When West Europe was in political darkness, the Oromo had the brightest political light: they were enjoying popular democracy and republican government to the fullest. Indeed, neither the Hellenes nor the Romans had enjoyed the kind of democracy the Oromo had enjoyed when Gadaa System was in full practice nor the Western democracy of the present time matches the Oromo democracy in some aspects, including the institution of balanced opposition of parties and balanced social stratification, vertical distribution of powers across age-sets and generation-sets, consociationalism in national decision-making, and polysepalous government.

Constitutionalism and legalism have been the essence of the Gadaa System. The cornerstone of the Gadaa System has been its constitution. The constitution is however not rigid. It is revised every eight years by the assembly of the people, *Caffee*. It is a living constitution, not fixed in stones by the ancient generation. Every generation has opportunities to have its input on the constitution during its lifetime. This could be one of the reasons the Oromo had not been eager to introduce writing until recently but have had memorized their constitution passionately to date. Though not written, it served no less a purpose than the modern written constitutions. Everything in the Gadaa System is based only on the Constitution (*heera*) and the laws (*seera*). It constituted the supremacy of the law over *all* men.

Gadaa democracy constituted the supremacy of the rule of law and limited and responsible government. Gadaa System limited the power of the elected *Abbaa Gadaa*. It also limited the office term to a single term of a

maximum of eight years. It opposed "despotic and authoritarian" rule by providing the legal and democratic framework for the removal of "unfit or corrupt leaders even before their term expired" (Baissa, 2004, p. 117). It has instituted a mid-term public appraisal of the leadership of the *Abbaa Gadaa* to impeach those who do not meet the standards of Gadaa leadership or break any of the laws.

In addition, the Gadaa System introduced the effective decentralization of political powers and institutions in the form of regional and local governments and assemblies. Gadaa System "operated at national pan-Oromo level in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and in the local republics from the eighteenth century" (Baissa, 2004, p. 118). Gadaa government is structured in a form of federation and confederation under the Gadaa Constitution. A cluster of self-governing local Gadaa governments forms a federation at the regional level. A federation was a regional government. These local and regional governments hold their separate assemblies of the multitude. A cluster of federations forms a confederation at the national (pan-Oromo) level. This forms the national government. The Oromo had a national government for centuries before it became a loose federation and, later, regional and local confederations were formed because of continued political decentralization and expansion of the Oromo people over a vast territory.

The Oromo have remained one of the great wonders because of the invention and practice of the Gadaa System. There are scholars who claim that their democracy is contemporary to the Athenian democracy (Lata, 1998). Others claim that studies have suggested it is over six thousand and four hundred years old (OBN, 2018). They had kept it intact through the ages of empires and kingdoms. Even though few local chiefdoms and kingdoms emerged in the 19th century among minority Oromo communities of *Maccaa*, as a nation, they had empowered no king or master to rule over them. They had governed themselves democratically, through elections, in the full-flagged republican democratic system, as it is known today They did so at least from as late as the beginning of the 15th century, based on Bahrey's 1593 record, or perhaps as early as the beginning of 3rd century CE according to Sirna (2012). They had kept their liberty for tens of centuries. The political practice of the Gadaa System came to a halt among the central Oromo in modern Ethiopia following their conquest by *Atse* Menelik II of the kingdom of Abyssinia in the last decades of the 19th century.

This chapter shall highlight the practice of the Gadaa System among the Oromo since the 16th century using examples of recorded accounts. It shall also emphasize the fact that the Gadaa System has now become a "heritage of humanity" after enduring, among others, total suppression by the state in Ethiopia and systemic attacks by the unfriendly Abyssinian elites and some Western scholars. In the end, it shall supply a summary. The chapter begins by asking: How old is the Gadaa System?

4.2. How old is the Gadaa System?

Exactly when the Gadaa System started is not yet confirmed (Jalata, 2004; Legesse, 2006; Hinew, 2012; Sirna, 2012). However, it is indisputable: it is an ancient institution in East Africa, and it emerged for the purpose of governance and social cohesion (Hinew, 2012). However, there are people who speculate that the Gadaa System might have existed before the formation of patriarchal and monarchal forms of government. Kedir (2016), for example, states:

> The fact that many Cushitic peoples and other East African peoples practice an age-set type of organization in their culture in the long-time presence in East Africa symbolized that Gadaa was an ancient institution and might have begun before the dispersion of the proto-[C]ushitics into a different nation. (n. p.)

This speculation is in line with the assertion by Houston (1926 [2004]) that the Kushites had reached the zenith of Democracy before Egyptian civilization, which consequently resulted in the subsequent Greek and Roman civilizations. The proto-Cushite people are believed to have lived in the Horn of Africa region between 7000 and 5000 BCE.

The earliest written historical description related to the Gadaa System, the *Buttaa ceremony* (the initiation and exit rite to Luba grade at the beginning of the Gadaa/Luba-grade of the Gadaa Cycle), can be found in Arabic writings from 851 CE (Ayana, 2015). The historical records by *Abbaa* Bahrey, a monk from Abyssinian (Egyptian) Coptic Church, in the late 16th century show that Gadaa System was a full-fledged government system of the Oromo by the end of the 15th century. According to Bahrey, Gadaa of the fathers of Gadaa *Muudanaa* was named *Jibbenaa* (Haile, 2002). Gadaa *Jibbenaa* was in

power forty years before Gadaa *Muudanaa* (1530–1538) from 1490–1498. In congruence with *Abbaa* Bahrey's historical record, the *Boorana* Oromo have maintained an oral chronological list of seventy-four *Abbaa Gadaa* from their memorable history; the *Karrayyuu* Oromo have seventy-two. These lists by themselves are pieces of evidence that the Gadaa System has been in practice among the *Boorana* and the *Karrayyuu* Oromo at least for 592 and 576 years respectively (see the chronological list of the *Abbaa Gadaa Fiixxee* of the *Boorana* Oromo from 1457–2025 in Appendixes). This takes the full-fledged practice of the Gadaa System to the early 15th century as per the available Abyssinian chronicles.

On the other hand, lucid claims take the probable beginning of the Gadaa System far back in time. Some studies, based on some oral tradition and oral Gadaa chronology, suggest that the Gadaa System existed as early as 212 CE (Sirna, 2012). Some others suggest that it might have started sometime immediately after 400 BCE when the Oromo were believed to have invented their calendar based on the stone pillars found in Kenya by Lynch and Robbins in 1978. More specifically, the year 300 BCE has been suggested as an approximate date of the invention of the Oromo calendar.[14] However, the reasonable age of the Gadaa System could be calculated from the Oromo intricate Gadaa Cycles. Using Gadaa "Cycles within cycles," research[15] by Gemetchu Megerssa in 1993 has established the practice of the Gadaa election as far back as 1000 BCE (Lata, 1998). This makes the Gadaa System about 3000 years old.

Oromo wisdom writers suggest that the Gadaa System is even older. Derribi Demissie Bokku, in his book *Oromo Wisdom in Black Civilization,* suggests that the Gadaa System of the Oromo is even older by a few hundreds of years than that has been established by Megerssa. Bokku's suggestion is also based on the "cycles within cycles" that have been used by the Oromo to trace the Gadaa chronology, to reckon time, and to keep oral records and pass them from one Gadaa generation to the other. Bokku (2011, p. 162) explains: According to the Oromo Gadaa calendar, a period of eight years (duration of one Gadaa) is called *Jaarraa.* Because Gadaa has five cycles, one Gadaa generational cycle is 40 years. The 40 years is known as *barruu, marsaa,* or *naannoo* Gadaa. Seven of the *barruu* Gadaa (Gadaa hemicycle) are known as *dhaachiis*. *Dhaachiis* is thus a period of 280 years (40 x 7). According to the *Gujii* and *Boorana* Oromo who have been practicing the Gadaa System almost uninterrupted, the practice of Gadaa has now reached the 12th

Dhaachiis (twelve cycles of 280 years each) which is 3,360 years (12 x 280). Thus, the possible date of the beginning of the Gadaa System could be centuries earlier than that submitted by Megerssa.

Other related Oromo oral traditions hold that the Gadaa System is even older. It could be as old as 4,800 years (see *Figure 1.14*). The latter is calculated based on yet other oral traditions that hold one *Dhaachiis* is eight *barruu*, not seven.

Based on the findings of the research by Gemetchu Megerssa and the deep-rooted oral chronicle of the Gadaa chronology based on the system of Gadaa "cycles within cycles" that run from *jaarraa* through *marsaa* to *dhaachiis* now reaching twelfth *dhaachiis*, Lata suggests that the Oromo Gadaa republican democracy is "a contemporary of the Athenian democracy, and hence a source of pride for all Africans and people of African descent" (Lata, 1998, p. 131).

Nevertheless, based on written historical records, the Gadaa System existed as a full-fledged system at the beginning of the sixteenth century (Jalata, 2004). This does not mean that it just began when historical records about it entered the world of literary works. It must have taken the Gadaa System centuries to evolve to become the mainstream and all-encompassing socio-political system of the Oromo. No nation's history or system of government, or culture, or civilization started just when it was written nor nations who have lost or did not have a literary tradition until very recently had nothing to record or had no history. Indeed, literary tradition itself is a recent history of humanity.

Based on Oromo oral traditions (*argaa-dhageettii*) that have been recorded in some of the Abyssinian documents such as "ዜናሁ ለጋላ" (History of the Oromo) and other Abyssinian records, a study by Negaso Gidada has revealed that the Oromo indeed practiced Gadaa System in central Ethiopia starting, at least, from 12th century at their politico-religious center known by the name *Walaabuu* (Gidada, 2016). According to the study, subsequently, the Oromo practiced Gadaa System at the politico-religious centers known as Xuqqur (1314 CE), Katata, and Galana (1314–1344), *Odaa Nabee* (1344–1370 CE) in the 14th century. Other Studies by Hinew (2012), Sirna (2012), to mention a few, support the assertion by Gidada (2016). The practice of the *Buttaa* ceremony of the Gadaa System has been recorded in some Arabic sources since 851 CE (Ayana, 2016). Hinew (2012), also based on oral traditions, takes the practice of Gadaa at *Odaa Nabee* to 204 CE in the 3rd

century. These show that Gadaa System was in full practice in the region that is now central Ethiopian at least four centuries before the alleged arrival of the Oromo to the region by the Abyssinian political and religious elites of the 16th century.

Gadaa System was first recorded in the mainstream written history of Abyssinia simply because it happened to have caused the devastating defeat of its opponent, an expanding Abyssinian Christian kingdom, triggering one of the fleeing learned monks to write the "history" of his enemies. The monk made it clear that he wrote it for personal vendetta and literary rationalization of the defeat of his sovereign. By then, Gadaa System had already matured and had become an effective form of government unparalleled for its democratic and republican ideals by any form of government that had existed. This all-inclusive maturity must have taken at least centuries, if not millennia.

To suggest how old the Gadaa System of the Oromo could be, however, one needs to consider the following:

1. the Oromo have inhabited the northeast and Horn of Africa region since time immemorial as indigenous people and had constituted Ancient Ethiopia (Ancient Kush)
2. the Oromo are a typical representation of the pre-dynastic Egyptians
3. only the Oromo people widely practices ancient Egyptian cultural elements to date
4. the Gadaa System is believed to have been invented by the Oromo sometime before 2000 BCE according to Oromo oral tradition
5. elements of the influence of the Gadaa System existed in the rule of both the Aksumite (group leadership) and Zagwean (generational leadership) kings
6. the gradual movement of the Oromo in the "Upper Ethiopia" region, contrary to the Abyssinian claim, was from north to south
7. the 16th-century offensive-defensive campaign of the Oromo was neither migration nor invasion but a campaign to recapture lost territories and to reunite disconnected Oromo communities
8. the portrayal of the Oromo by the Abyssinian as "newcomers" in the 16th century and afterward has been a failed attempt of the Abyssinian elites to reverse the history of the arrival of the Semitic language speaking Tigre and the Amhara (Agazi and Habashat) people from the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula to the

continent of Africa sometime between the second half of the last millennium before the Common Era and around the first century
9. the claim that the Gadaa System is over three thousand years old (3,360 years) is not supported fully by archaeological or historical evidence
10. the claim by some Oromo scholars that Oromo democracy is contemporary to the Athenian democracy of the 5th century, though it can be true, could not be in the form and as full-fledged democracy that it was in the early 16th century.

Considering the above factors, it is reasonable to suggest that the Gadaa System existed before the turn of the Common Era. More specifically, the Gadaa System could be twenty-five centuries old.

4.3. The Practice of Gadaa System in History

4.3.1. The Practice of the Gadaa System during the 16th Century

By the late 15th century, the Oromo nation had an exceeding sophisticated and constituted republican form of government, the Gadaa government. It had a non-codified (unwritten) Constitution and bodies of laws but a regularly memorized wealth of oral literature. It had five universal Gadaa parties that made up the polity. The polity had elected leaders, balanced opposition, etc., all under the supremacy of the rule of law. The people made laws. The people formed the Gadaa government by their free will. Their government had separated powers into the judiciary, legislative, and executive branches. They also had highly sophisticated political ideas, including *walabummaa* (freedom), *bilisummaa* (liberation), *birmadummaa* (sovereignty), and *mirgooma* (liberty). They practiced grass-root popular democracy and a pure form of a republican government system.

Accordingly, long before the emergence of the American democracy, the Oromo had enjoyed Gadaa Democracy for centuries. A variant of Gadaa Democracy started to take root in North America only after 13 small British colonies along the northeast coastal region of the present USA declared independence in the late eighteenth century (1776). The self-liberated

colonies formed a confederation that led to the formation of the USA. Long before the making of the now world-famous American constitution by the union of the confederate states, the Oromo had developed *Heera* Gadaa (Gadaa Constitution) that had incorporated nearly all the fundamental principles of the American Constitution and much more.

For the Oromo, their Constitution has always been from, with, and within them: they originated it; they constantly updated it every eight years; they always remembered it by heart. Unlike the founding fathers of the USA, they had not written it. They always kept it in their hearts and mind and upheld it. Because Oromo democracy was a truly popular democracy and the Gadaa government was a pure republican government, it was the duty and responsibility of every grownup citizen to fully comprehend Gadaa Constitution (*heera*) and Gadaa laws (*seera*), and pass them on to their descendants. All male Oromo who become *Luba* must have known all the *heera* and all the *seera* by heart. In other words, every male Oromo who had reached middle life must have understood the Constitution and the laws.

From historical records that have been produced by disinterested parties, it is known that the Oromo have practiced full-fledged Gadaa democracy and republican form of government at least for the last five centuries. The only exceptions were during brief interruptions among central communities in modern Ethiopia. An external force caused some of the interruptions in some places; few others were caused by extended decentralization that led to the decline of the power of the central Gadaa government. There has been no time when the Gadaa System of the Oromo was interrupted totally throughout the Oromo country. It has continued uninterrupted until the present time in parts of the Oromo country.

One such part of the Oromo country is present in southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya. The *Boorana* Oromo of southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya, who have been practicing the Gadaa System without interruption, at least since 1457, have recently elected their 71st *Abbaa Gadaa*, alias president. They have kept records of their *Abbaa Gadaas* and have elected leaders for a one-term only eight-year office term throughout their recorded history.

The earliest first-hand historical description of the Gadaa System of the Oromo in Abyssinian records comes from *Abbaa* Bahrey's manuscript, *History of the Oromo*. The handwritten manuscript was produced in 1593, during the seventh year of the government of Gadaa *Mul'ataa* (1586–1594) (Legesse, 2006). It details the accounts of the warfare of the Gadaa

government of the Oromo against the kingdom of Abyssinian starting from *Gadaa Malbaa* (1522–1530).

This work has remained the most valuable record of the Oromo and the Gadaa System from the 16th century. It is the first and the most recognized written primary source of information about the Oromo. Albeit being brief and heavily loaded with the insolence of the writer towards the Oromo, the very reason why he recorded the "history of the enemy" in the first place, it has preserved the progress of the Gadaa-based offensive-defensive campaigns of the Oromo from 1520–1593. Although Bahrey ventured to write about the Oromo to write the "history of the enemy," his record is not only based on Gadaa chronology but also on the protracted offensive-defensive campaign of the Oromo to reclaim territories that had been taken from them by the expanding Christian kingdom of Abyssinia and several Muslim Principalities in present central Ethiopia.

In one of his celebrated lines about the Gadaa System of the Oromo, Bahrey states:

> They [the Oromo] have neither king nor master like other peoples, but they obey the luba [*Luba*] during a period of eight years; at the end of eight years another luba is made, and the first give up the office. They do this at a fixed time. (Bahrey as cited in Baissa, 2004, p. 104)

Several translations of *Abbaa* Bahrey's manuscript and its exegesis are available either as a separate work or as part of Abyssinian historiography. Nonetheless, little interpretation has been made within the context of the Gadaa System, and from the point of view of the Oromo culture, tradition, and oral history. Both Abyssinian and Western translators and interpreters have not been free from the burden of the context set in Abyssinian chronicles and historiography. Abyssinian historiography, which has become modern Ethiopian historiography, outlandishly posits that Oromo were 16th-century ion newcomers to present central Ethiopia and portrays them as a brutal force of destruction. It also claims that the Oromo nation was the archenemy of the Abyssinian Christian kingdom and its state Church. Legesse (2006) explains that it has been within this context and perspective that both Beckingham and Huntingford have translated and analyzed *Abbaa* Bahrey's work. Similarly, Edward Ullendroff, one of the founders of the Ethiopian Studies Association, also made his now-infamous remarks about

the culture, social organization, and the successes of the Oromo against their Abyssinian enemy within the same context.

In the early 16th century, the Oromo people were organized under one central Gadaa government and the army was organized under one paramount *Abbaa Duulaa* (war minister). The *Abbaa Duulaa* and *Jabaa warraa* (leader of the army of *gosa*) on one hand and *Abbaa Cibraa* (leader of the age-set army) and *Jabaa Waraanaa* (battle leaders) on the other hand might have reported to each other respectively. The *Abbaa Duulaa*, according to the structure of the Gadaa System, reports to the Gadaa Council, not to the *Abbaa Gadaa,* and there could be many *Abbaa Duulaas* at a time, perhaps as many as the number of major *gosa* of the Oromo. The Oromo army that Bermudez met in the mid-16th century might have been under the command of *Jabaa Waraanaa* or *Abbaa Cibra*.

In the mid-16th century, Joao Bermudez records the orderly organization and regimental advances of the Oromo warriors. He saw that the Oromo army "advanced collected in bodies, like squadrons" (Pankhurst, 1997, p. 284). His observation was from sometime during the end of Gadaa *Kiilolee* (1538–1546) and the beginning of Gadaa *Biifolee* (1546–1554). He was a Portuguese commander of musketeers at the southern front of the kingdom in the service of *Atse* Gelawdewos (r. 1540–1559) in the 1550s (Delebo, 1982 Eth. C.). The Portuguese contingent of four hundred musketeers had arrived in Abyssinia to save the Christian kingdom from the Jihad of Ahmed ibn Ibrahim Al-Ghazi, alias Ahmad Gragn (Ahmad the Leftist), and had succeeded in its mission but only after half of the contingent was killed. At the time, the Oromo were actively engaged in war both with the Christian Abyssinian kingdom to the north and the Muslim Sultanate of Adal to the east.

4.3.2. The Practice of Gadaa System from 17th to 19th Century

During the last decade of the 16th century, and the first and the second decade of the 17th century, Gadaa System was so attractive to Abyssinian military and political elites that they had almost replaced their monarchy with it. During this period, the kingdom of Abyssinia was in a political dilemma whether to adopt the Oromo Gadaa republicanism or to continue the

tradition of the monarchy. Revolting prominent ruling elites (*Mekuwanent*)of the kingdom conspired to abolish the monarchy and replace it with their aspired version of Oromo republicanism. After the death of *Atse* Zedengle (r. 1603–1604), they resolved that a monarch would no longer rule over them, and they would declare their liberty in their respective dominions and adopt the republican form of government of the Oromo (Tafla, 1987). Their attempt failed. They, however, tried to abolish the monarchy one more time in 1620, during the reign of *Atse* Susenyos (r. 1607–1632). This time they conspired and swore allegiance to each other to murder the king and never crown any king before they were tried for the conspiracy and executed (Tafla, 1987).

In the 1620s, Jerome Lobo (1887 [2007]) records tangentially the government of the Oromo. He was a Jesuit father and leader of the Portuguese preachers. He and his contingent were trying to reach the kingdom of Abyssinia from the south via the then Oromo country of Malindi in modern Kenya. Even though because of his disapproval of it and his inconsiderate attitude towards the people he considered barbarians, he could not write enough about the Gadaa System. Nonetheless, he states that the Oromo freely and democratically elect their leader for a single eight-year term of office. In his *A Voyage to Abyssinia* (Henry Morley Eds., Samuel Johnson Trans.) he records that the Oromo of southern Ethiopia, whom he had met on his unsuccessful voyage, chose *Abbaa Gadaa* (Lobo called him a "king" mistakenly) whom they call *Luba* every eight-year (Lobo, 1887 [2007]).

Father Lobo further describes the customs of reception to have an audience with the *Abbaa Gadaa*. He says:

> I found him [the *Abbaa Gadaa*] in a straw hut something larger than those of his subjects, surrounded by his courtiers, who had each a stick in his hand, which is longer or shorter according to the quality of the person admitted into the king's presence. (Lobo, 1887[2007], Chap. II)

What Father Lobo saw and described is close to what the Oromo of southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya practice today. By then, the Oromo were the main stock of peoples between River Juba and River Tana in modern eastern Kenya and southwestern Somalia. They had expanded in the vast region between Lake Tana and River Tana. At Malindi, southeast of Kenya, he saw the *Abbaa Gadaa* at his residence, the seat of the Gadaa government. Among the *Booranaa* this seat is known as *Ollaa Arbooraa*. It is

the temporary seat of the Gadaa government. The attendants, members of the *yaa'a*, still hold *horooroo*, which Lobo calls stick, but the association of its size to the "quality of the person" must be his own interpretation. In the Gadaa System, all *yaa'aa* members (*Luba*) are equal; all sovereign men are equal.

This Gadaa government knew all the peoples who inhabit the region from Malindi to Abyssinia, northern Ethiopia. Besides, it had profiled these people based on their social behaviors and military ferocity. It was based on the accumulated knowledge that it advised Lobo and his company that his attempt to reach Abyssinian from the south could be futile; a piece of advice that he heeded and went back to the sea to try to reach Abyssinia from the east, which he succeeded.

In the 18th century, James Bruce (1791), who was at the service of the kingdom of Abyssinia, also records about the Gadaa government of the Oromo. Though his primary goal was neither the Oromo nor the Gadaa System, he has made interesting records. According to him, the Oromo, who "gird Abyssinia round at all points from east to west," and were divided into three divisions (eastern, southern, and western) where each was composed of "seven tribes" (pp. 402–407) and had an elaborate representative democracy and exercised free election. He writes:

> Each of the three [Eastern, Western, and Southern) divisions of [Oromo] elects a king [*Abbaa Bokkuu/Abbaa Gadaa*], that is, there is a king for every seven tribes. There is also a kind of nobility among them, from whose families alone the sovereign can be chosen. But there are certain degrees of merit (all warlike) that raise, from time to time, their plebeian families to nobility, and the right of suffrage. No one of these nobles can be elected till past forty years of age unless he has slain with his own hand a number of men which, added to his years, makes up forty.
>
> The council of each of the seven tribes first meets separately in its own councils. Here it determines how many are necessary to be left behind for the governing, guarding, and cultivating the territory, while those fixed upon by many votes go as delegates to meet the representatives of the other nations at the domicile, or head-quarters of the king [*Abbaa Bokkuu/Abbaa Gadaa*], among the tribe from which the sovereign of the last

> seven [eight] years was taken. Here they sit down under a tree [*Odaa*] . . . After a variety of votes, the number of candidates is reduced to four, and the suffrage of six of these nations go then no farther; but the seventh, whose turn it is to have a king [*Abbaa Bokkuu/Abbaa Gadaa*] out of their tribe, choose, from among the four, one, whom they crown with a garland of Wanzey [*Odaa*], and put a sceptre, or bludgeon, of that wood in his hands, which they call Buco [*Bokkuu*]. (Bruce, 1791, pp. 403–404)

From the descriptions of James Bruce, the following could be understood:

First, there existed three divisions of the Oromo surrounding the kingdom of Abyssinia from east to west. These were the "Bartuma" (*Walloo, Yajjuu, Raayyaa*), the *Tuulamaa*, and the *Maccaa*. Each division was a polity and elected its *Abbaa Bokkuu/Abbaa Gadaa*. From the universal practice of the Gadaa System among the vast Oromo nation, it is incredibly straightforward to deduce that many such 'divisions' who did not share a border with the kingdom of Abyssinia had also elected their leaders. These include the *Karrayyuu*, the *Gujii*, the *Boorana*, the *Arsii*, the *Ituu*, etc.

Second, the election that Bruce describes could not be the election of a king but *Abbaa Gadaa*. Historically, the Oromo did not have a king before the 19th century when *Abbaa Duulaas* in the Gibie region begun to impose themselves as Oromo monarchs on the people but elected leaders for an eight-year single term of office. He mistakenly refers to the elected person as "king" in the 18th century. The concept of sovereignty was also different among the Oromo. Every head of household in Oromo society is sovereign. Every sovereign Oromo is a self-made nobility. This sovereignty is not hereditary. Bruce must be mistaken in implying that the office of *Abbaa Gadaa* was hereditary. The mistake is clear from his reference to the *Abbaa Gadaa* as "king." He made the mistake by the association to the Abyssinian monarchy to which he had become part of its aristocracy after he married the daughter of Empress Mentewab. In the regular Gadaa election, candidates for *Abbaa Gadaa,* usually six in number, are elected at the end of *Qondaala* grade, at about the age of twenty-four, from within their grade members (*miseensa*) of their party (see *Figure* 1.5, Election Period A). They are groomed for office for about twenty years. At the transition from Regular *Raaba* to *Raaba Doorii*, three of them, not four, are chosen by a variety of votes in two

election stages. They would make up the triumvirate *Abbaa Gadaas* of the Gadaa government they form. One of them would be the First *Abbaa Gadaa* of the upcoming government. The takeover of the state power takes place at *Baallii* ceremony four years later because of the staggered succession. Bruce must be describing the election of the First *Abbaa Gadaa* of the upcoming Gadaa government that takes place during the *Caffee* assembly, at the mid-term of the current Gadaa government (see *Figure 1.5.*, Election Period B and the discussion under section 1.3.5.1.)

Third, it is understandable that the Gadaa government had local lower-level governments. Bruce informs us that each member of the autonomous division had an independent Council. Each autonomous division had seven "tribes." Each "tribe" had its own independent Council. This Council determined by vote how many members of the polity should remain on duty at home while the delegation may be away for weeks or months. The Council also determines the number of representatives, delegates, by vote.

Fourth, it is also understandable that *Abbaa Bokkuu/Abbaa Gadaa* is nominated by the delegates of all the members of the autonomous division but elected by the delegates of the party that would take power. The delegates of all members "tribes" go to the seat of the Gadaa government (*Odaa*). All delegates sit under *Odaa* and vote multiple times to reduce the number of nominees to four. To do so they employ a "variety of votes." The delegates of the incoming governing party chose one of the four nominees by vote. Finally, the *Abbaa Bokkuu/Abbaa Gadaa* elect is crowned with the branches of the tree under which he was elected.

Fifth, the *Abbaa Gadaa* is bestowed with *Bokkuu*, ceremonial mace made of the *Odaa* tree; hence, he is *Abbaa Bokkuu*, custodian of the *Bokkuu*. *Bokkuu* is the symbol of the sovereignty of the polity. Every *Abbaa Gadaa* must have one. Antoine D' Abbadie compared it to the mace of the English parliament in the late 19th century (D' Abbadie, 2007 [1880]; Legesse, 2006). It "is carried before him wherever he goes during his eight years of tenure as head of the polity; it is produced in the general meetings of the nation" (Bruce, 1790, p. 68).

Sixth, there existed a constitution because of which each "tribe" had an equal opportunity to have *Abbaa Bokkuu* elected from among its members. In addition, there existed a fixed order in which *Abbaa Bokkuu* was elected from each "tribe." Bruce was likely referring to the Gadaa parties, which are

five, by the term, "tribe," if he was not describing a very different election, the election of *Abbaa Duulaa*.

4.3.3. The Practice of the Gadaa System during the 19th Century

In the late 19th century, a British diplomat and a French scholar witnessed the operation of the Gadaa government and its excellence as a political system at its sub-unit or local level by observing it in person. The British Victorian diplomat, Walter C. Plowden, expressed his admiration of the *Gudduruu* Oromo democratic government in vivid words. He could not hide his admiration for the democratic government of the *Gudduruu* Oromo. In 1868, he writes:

> Gudru [*Gudduruu*] is, perhaps, a specimen of nearly as pure a republic as can exist, and one that would be almost impossible in a wealthy or civilized nation, where, as interests become more complicated, and consequently justice more intricate, the necessity for concentration is soon felt, to avoid confusion. (Walter C. Plowden as cited in Baissa, 2004, p. 109)

In addition, the French scholar and traveler, Antoine D' Abbadie, also witnessed the practice of republican democracy among the *Gudduruu*. D' Abbadie had lived in western Oromia in the 1870s and had observed the Gadaa System among the *Gudduruu* Oromo of *Maccaa*. In 1880, he reports that the *Gudduruu* have a quartet separation of power in their 'republic'. He explains:

> each republic had its assembly, elected *Luba* council, and officials such as *Abbaa Gadaa* or *Abbaa* boku, the president, *Abbaa* dula (father of war, an official responsible for campaigns), *Abbaa* saa (official in charge of public property) and iressa (a religious official in charge of ritual matters). … The council officials were elected from representatives of the different subclans (qomo) into which the clan family was further divided. The *Luba* leaders provided justice, settled interpersonal conflicts, and maintained law and order as well as making legislation (sera-tuma) whenever necessary.

> Additionally, they defended the clan against its enemies and supervised the performance of rituals at the right time. (D' Abbadie, 1880, as cited in Baissa, 2004, p.109).

From the accounts of Plowden and D' Abbadie[16], *Gudurru*, part of the *Maccaa* Oromo, was a local republic. Indeed, in the words of the former, it was as pure as a republic could be. Yet, it is only an example of Oromo republicanism. In fact, according to "The Genealogy of *Maccaa*" (Gidada, 2016), *Gudurru* was one of the nine (*Limmuu, Sayyo, Calliyaa, Leeqaa, Tum'ee, Noonnoo, Siibuu, Yabantuu, and Gudurru*) lineages under *Oboo*, one of the four (*Jaawwii, Liiban, Giddaa, Hullee,* and *Oboo*) higher lineages of *Maccaa*. Dozens of republics like *Gudurru* might have existed among the *Maccaa* Oromo only.

The scale of Oromo republicanism becomes clearer when one takes into account the whole Oromo country that has now become Oromia. Regional federations, such as the *Maccaa*, could have up to forty local republics, like the *Gudurru*. *Maccaa* is the largest sub-moiety of the Oromo nation. However, it is only one of the ten major sub-moieties of the Oromo of modern Ethiopia. This means, in total, over two hundred local republics, in the likeness of the *Gudurru*, could have existed across the country of the Oromo at some point in time before the emergence of some Oromo monarchies among the *Maccaa*.

D' Abbadie makes it clear that all the local republics in *Gudurru* operated in the same way. In other words, all were under the same constitution. Each of them had autonomous *Caffee*, democratically elected *Luba* Council, and elected Government officials, including *Abbaa Gadaa*, *Abbaa Duulaa*, *Abbaa Sa'aa*, and *Irreessa*. Each of them had a fully functioning republican government federated under the Gadaa Constitution.

Even though minor variations were expected, all other local republics must have operated just as the *Gudurru*. Among others, the number and the name of the government official may vary from republic to republic across if not within the federation/confederation. In some republics, the name of the head of the government and the state, the highest office of the polity is known as *Abbaa Bokkuu,* in others as *Abbaa Gadaa.* Among the *Tuulamaa* Oromo (Northern *Booranaa*), for example, the Gadaa Council is constituted of nine *Abbaa Gadaas*. These are *Abbaa Bokkuu* (President), *Abbaa Bokkuu* (First Vice-President), *Abbaa Bokkuu* (Second Vice-President), *Abbaa Caffee* (Chairperson), *Abbaa Dubbii* (Speaker), *Abbaa Seeraa* (Memorizer of the laws and the resolutions of the *Caffee*), *Abbaa Alangaa* (Judge who executes the

decision), *Abbaa Duulaa* (In charge of the army), and *Abbaa Sa'aa* (In charge of the economy) (Melbaa, 1988). Among the *Boorana*, the Gadaa Council has six members. Among the *Tuulamaa* and *Ituu*, *Luba* grade is the fifth Gadaa-grade. Beyond such minor variations, not only the *Maccaa* republics but also the republics of all Oromo federations must have operated in the same fashion.

The cause of some minor variations in the practice of the Gadaa System has been the extensive decentralization of the Gadaa government. The decentralization of the Gadaa government of the Oromo to local levels since the 16th century, in turn, has been the result of the decentralization of the pan-Oromo *Caffee*. The *Maccaa* Oromo had their joint inter-clan *Caffee* at *Odaa Bisil* located between Awash and Gibie Rivers. But when each clan was allowed to administer itself according to the established Gadaa laws and procedures, many sub-clan assemblies were established at *Gooroo Sirbaa, Bokkuu Cittaa, Mi'aa Iressaa, Bulluq, Qobboo, Hulle, Barakat, Colii, Tulluu Walal, Mi'aa Ganaa,* and *Gooroo* (Baissa 2004). Based on the study by Gidada (2016), the *Maccaa* also had their politico-religious centers at *Xuqqur* (Jibaat), *Xuxxe Bisil* (Gibie), and *Haroo Makkoo* (*Tulluu Garjaa* or Western Ulmaayaa). Similarly, the *Tuulamaa* Oromo had established their inter-clan *Caffees* for some time at *Ballo, Birbirsa Xiyyaa, Fooqa Awas,* and *Galaan* (Baissa, 2004). The eastern Oromo of *Harargee* had their inter-clan *Caffee* at *Odaa Bultum* but later decentralized it to clan *Caffee* at *Karra Qurqura, Bullullo*, and others (Baissa, 2004). Many other local and inter-clan *Caffees* were also formed in Gojjam, Dambia, and other territories, including in Kenya, where the Oromo had settled. Such decentralization over extensive geography undoubtedly brings along minor variations.

Nevertheless, these local and inter-clan *Caffee* were just smaller versions of the greater pan-Oromo *Caffee*, such as inter-junior sub-moiety assemblies of the *Maccaa* and *Tuulamaa*. The *Maccaa* and *Tuulamaa* had maintained the joint *Caffee* at *Odaa Nabee* where, according to Atsme Giorgis, up to one hundred thousand Oromo used to assemble (Tafla, 1987). At all levels, the *Caffees* functioned similarly, and their respective Gadaa governments operated just as symmetric states in federations operate today.

In addition to Walter C. Plowden and Antoine D' Abbadie, Élisée Reclus, the well-known French geographer, and writer documented Gadaa Democracy as it was being practiced among the eastern Oromo, the Ituu federation, in the late 19th century. He explains:

> The community is organised on republican principles. The administration of the commune is invariably entrusted to a council of elders [Gadaa Council], whose moti [*Mootii*], or president [*Abbaa Gadaa*], is charged with the executive functions. With him are associated the treasurer [*Abbaa Horii*], the high priest [*Qaallun*], and the boku [*Abbaa Bokkuu*] or director of the general assembly, these ministers–being usually chosen [elected] for a period of eight years. The director or "speaker" [*Abbaa Bokkuu*], who presides over the public discussions, holding a wooden mace [*Bokkuu*] as the sign of his office, is required to keep the debate open until absolute unanimity is arrived at. . . . But once a final decision is reached, the question assumes a sacred character. ... and the priests [*Qaallun*], . . . traverse the land, proclaiming to all the people the resolutions taken by the national assembly. (Reclus, 1890, p. 401–402)

This explanation is in line with what other Westerners have recorded. As discussed above, the western Oromo had a purely republican form of government in the mid-19th century. The eastern *Ituu* Oromo, just as the western *Maccaa* Oromo, were republican. They had *Luba* Council, which Reclus call it "council of elders" mistakenly. The head (*mootii*) of the Council, *Abbaa Gadaa*, oversaw the executive branch of the government. He was also the chairperson of the *Caffee*, the legislative branch of the government.

However, starting from the first half of the 19th century, fundamental changes in the practice of the Gadaa System have been introduced among some minority Oromo communities when they forcefully altered the Gadaa government. In the early 19th century, Oromo communities in the Gibie region and *Leeqaa* were highly influenced by multiple factors. These include the growing wealth disparity among the Oromo, the emerging social class due to highly specialized livelihoods, the growing influence of *Abbaa Duulaa* (War leaders), and most importantly, the introduction of long-distance trade that required the establishment and administration of urban trade and market centers. The *Abbaa Duulaas* who volunteered to supplied security and protection for the traders became more involved in the control of resources. In collaboration with their clients, the wealthy traders, some of them set up a few Oromo monarchies.

The formation of these monarchies was a self-imposition of the wealthy men and few *Abbaa Duulaas* on the Oromo mass rather than the free choice of the Oromo. The Oromo were against the formation of the moieties. Among the Oromo who fell under these monarchies with the threat of force of *Abbaa Duulaas* who enthroned themselves as *Mootii* (kings), the Gadaa system ceased to function as a full-fledged form of democratic government but remained the main culture of the people. In all other regions of the vast Oromo country, however, Gadaa System had remained fully functional both as a democratic form of government and as a mainstream culture until it was banned by the *Atse* Menelik II of the kingdom of Abyssinia following the collapse of the Oromo resistance against Abyssinian settler colonist in the late 19th century.

Except among the Oromo of the Gibie and *Leeqaa* regions (and among the assimilated Oromo in Abyssinian Proper), the practice of the Gadaa System remained universal among the mainstream Oromo throughout the 19th century. Before the mid-19th century, all the Oromo confederations and federations practiced Gadaa System with very insignificant variations. The practices of Gadaa among the eastern *Harargee* (*Ituu* and *Humbanaa*) and the western *Maccaa* Oromo, as discussed above, were the standard practices. The whole government system of the Oromo was based on the Gadaa System, a universal system among the Oromo where all Oromo polities had *Caffee*, elected *Luba* Council and elected Gadaa officials. The Gadaa Constitution fashioned the Gadaa governments: it is the essential design of all the Gadaa governments – local, regional, and national. All the Gadaa governments operated with the same principle.

4.3.4. The Practice of the Gadaa System since the beginning of the 20th Century

Since the beginning of the 20th century, European and Ethiopian scholars (anthropologists, sociologists, historians, and others) have studied the Gadaa System. These include Alessandro Triulzi, Marco Bassi, Enrico Cerulli, Paul Baxter, Eike Haberland, John Hinnat, Karl Eric Knutson, Bonnie K. Holcomb, Edmund J. Keller, Herbert Lewis, Donald Levine, Abbas Haji Gnamo, Abdullahi Shongolo, Alemayehu Haile, Asafa Jalata, Asmarom Legesse (now an Eritrean), Beletech Dheressa, Mekuria Bulcha,

Dinsa Lepis Aba Jobir, Gemetchu Megersa, Gollo Huqqa, Hunde Daba, Kuwee Kumsa, Lemmu Baissa, Lencho Tadesse, Muhammed Hassen, Zelamem Tesfaye Sirna, Sisai Ibssa, Tari Jarso, and Tessema Ta'a. There are, however, few large-scale and exemplary scholarly works on Gadaa System in the 20th century. It is worthwhile to highlight some of the works before presenting a detailed account of how the *Boorana*a Oromo, the southern Oromo, practice the Gadaa System now.

In the early 20th century, Enrico Cerulli (1922) writes about the Oromo and their Gadaa System in his *The Folk-Literature of the Oromo of southern Abyssinia*. In this work, among others, he records that Gadaa System is (a) a complex socio-political system; (b) an egalitarian and republican system where every son of an Oromo becomes *Luba* exactly forty years after his father; and (c) it is the standard measure of human advancement for the Oromo. Also, he compares the Greek and Oromo calendars: as the Greeks had the Olympiad calendar, the Oromo have the Gadaa calendar. Cerulli also observes, adding to its complexity, Gadaa System receives far less attention and far unfair treatment by Europeans.

In the 1970s, Asmarom Legesse studies the functioning of the Gadaa System among the *Boorana* Oromo in depth. His first book, *Gada: Three Approaches to the Study of African Society* (New York, NY: The Red Sea Press, 1973) has been instrumental for the introduction and better understanding of the Gadaa System of the Oromo among academic circles.

In 1974, an Abyssinian-Ethiopia-nist, Donald Levine (American sociologist, educator, social theorist, and writer who thought and researched in Ethiopia and published several books on Ethiopia) asserts the advances of the Gadaa ideal of the Oromo as the most complex social organization. He testifies: "Gadaa system represents one of the most complex systems of the social organization ever devised by the human imagination" (Levine, 1974, p. 132).

In the 1990s, Marko Bassi conducts another detailed study on the practice of the Gadaa System among the *Boorana*a Oromo. In his book *Decisions in the Shade: Political and Juridical Processes among the Oromo-Borana* (Trenton, NJ and Asmara, Eritrea: The Red Sea Press, 2005 (first published in 1996)), he analyzes the socio-political and religious institutions, the assemblies and their procedures, and the juridical and political processes, and the normative and legislative spheres of the Gadaa System of the *Boorana*a

Oromo. His main emphasis, however, is more on the rituals related to the Gadaa System.

At the end of the 20th century, Edmund Keller affirms that the Oromo had established a confederation probably as early as the 12th century CE. He writes, "It is known that between the 12th and 15th centuries, the [Oromo] were already organized into two confederations known as the Barentu and Borana federations" (Keller, 1998, p.115). Through such federations, the Oromo have had a long history of decentralized government, regional autonomy, dual moiety system, and have been practicing democracy, self-rule, and shared rule in line with the modern federal arrangements.

In 2004, Baissa (2004), based on the decentralization of the Gadaa Democracy and its corresponding decentralized government, argues that the Oromo Gadaa Democracy has not been only a republic form of government but also a federal arrangement. He, for example, argues that the Oromo Gadaa government was a federal system:

> The Gada system was in practice a loose federal arrangement even though some call it a confederation. It was a federal arrangement because, at the highest and general level, it had executive, military, judicial, legislative, and ritual responsibilities while it enabled self-administration at the lower levels. Even though Bahrey [1593] did not discuss them, there were regional and local Gadaa councils, below the supreme *Luba* council, where local *Abbaa* gada, irresa, *Abbaa* dula, and other officials were elected to provide justice, keep peace and order among the people. It was from these regional and local clan councils that leadership at the highest level was recruited. Specifically, the major clan families and moieties, on the basis of their seniority, elected representatives who were sent to the supreme *Luba* council of which Bahrey left us the account. It was also based on seniority of their moieties and clans as well as their personal merit that the top leaders in each Gadaa class or *miseensa* were elected. (Baissa, 2004, pp. 106–107)

In 2000 [2006], Asmarom Legesse writes a sequel to his first book, *Gada*. In this book, *Oromo democracy: An indigenous African political system* (Trenton, NJ, USA and Asmara, Eritrea: The Red Sea Press, 2006 (First Full Edition)), he discusses Oromo democracy, its constitutional principles, key institutions of the polity, and its dual organization and the *Qaalluu* institution. In addition,

he elaborates on the role of age-regiments and age-sets in Gadaa warfare. He questions the accuracy and currency of the traditional interpretation of *Abbaa* Bahrey on Gadaa System vise-a-vise the evidence that is readily available among the people who have continued to practice the Gadaa System and suggests a re-examination of Bahrey's evidence. He also submits the thesis of rebuilding and replication of Moiety across the Oromo country and encourages researchers on Moiety exogamy.

4.4. Present Practice of Gadaa System: An Example

As an exemplary present practice of the Gadaa System, this writer has selected the *Boorana* Oromo. The *Boorana*, southern *Booranaa*, are one of the Oromo polities where the Gadaa System has been in practice almost without interruption. The interested scholars who studied Gadaa System did so based on its practice among the *Boorana*. Researchers and students of the Gadaa System and the Oromo from other polities agree that the *Boorana* practice Gadaa System with little innovation from its 16th-century version. The *Boorana* (also *Booran*) live in southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya. They are made up of two moieties, *Sobbo* and *Gonna*.

Based on the explanations of Asmarom Legesse (2006), the *Boorana* Oromo have elaborate institutions of the Gadaa Assembly, *Yaa'a*. Structurally, the Gadaa Assembly (*Yaa'a Arbooraa*) [Assembly of the Gadaa Council] is composed of two types of Councils, "Senior" and Lateral. Also, it has an opposition council known as the "Junior" Council. The Councils are constituted by *Hayyuu Aduulaa*, *Hayyuu Meddhichaa*, and *Hayyuu Garbaa* respectively. The Councils function as a single body.

The "Senior" Council is the governing Gadaa Council. It is made up of six-elected *Abbaa Gadaas, Hayyuu Aduulaa*. One out of the six is elected as the First *Abbaa Gadaa* (*Abbaa Gadaa Fiixxee*). He is the Chairperson of the Council. Even so, he has only equal voting power with the others. Two of the *Hayyuu Aduulaa* are elected deputies, also known as *Kontoma*. The three remainders are elected members. The *Abbaa Gadaa Fiixxee* and the two deputy *Abbaa Gadaa* (*Kontomaa)* constitute the *sadeen* Gadaa, the Gadaa Triumvirate. Members of the Council live in *Ollaa Arbooraa*, the headquarters of the Gadaa government.

The Lateral Council is ancillary. It stands in support of the Senior Council. It is made up of councilors (*Hayyuu Meddhicha*) who belong to the same *Luba* as do the *Hayyuu Aduulaa*. It is a subsidiary of the Council of the governing Gadaa. Its role is to serve as a 'shadow government,' in case the "Senior" Council fails to execute its functions due to unexpected external cause or internal failure; it may take over. Its members, except the two Chairpersons who are *Hayyuu Aduulaa*, are *Hayyuu Meddhichaa*. They are elected from every clan: in effect, they are the *hayyuu* of the *gosa*. Their number depends on the number of clans within the polity. In *Boorana* Gadaa Council, their number is eighteen because there are eighteen clans. They are divided into two Councils, after the two balanced sub-moieties of *Boorana*. Hence, they make up Councils of *Gonna* and *Sobboo*, each chaired by one *Abbaa Gadaa Kontoma*. The *Hayyuu Meddhichaa* reside within their respective communities, but they attend the assembly sessions (*yaa'aa*) regularly.

The "Junior" Council is an opposition. It is made up of *Hayyuu Garbaa,* elected from the four non-governing parties (Gadaas). They are semi-retired and retired *Lubas* with rich experiences. The role of the "Junior" Council is making sure that the governing party serves all members of the polity fairly and justly. The *Hayyuu Garbaa* do not have a formal assembly (*Yaa'a*). They are "attached" to the "Senior" Council and the two branches of the Lateral Council. They, however, live disjointedly in three satellite villages known as *Ollaa Baatuu*.

Functionally, the Gadaa Council appears to operate slightly differently. Based on the explanation of Kassa (2012), the *Aduulaa* Council and the *Arbooraa* Council are not the same in composition. Indeed, the *hayyuu Aduulaa* institute three sub-branches of the Gadaa Council. These branches, *Arbooraa, Haawwaxa,* and *Koonnoo,* serve as the three pillars of the *Aduulaa* Council. Besides, the *Hayyuu Garbaa* function as an integral part of the three pillars. The three pillars are also referred to as Gadaa *Arbooraa*, Gadaa *Meddhicha*, and Gadaa *Garba*. As such, contrary to the assertion of Legesse (2006), they are referred to as the three Gadaas (*Sadeen* Gadaa).

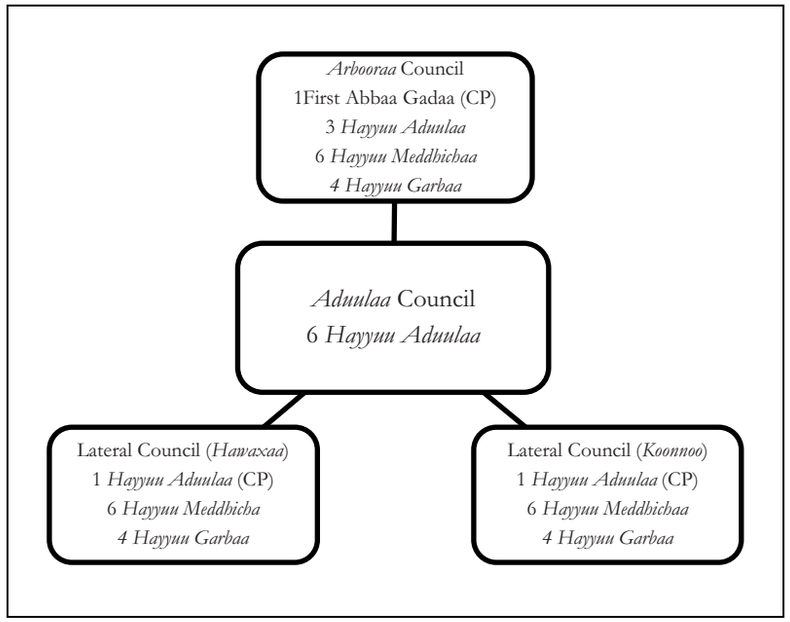


Figure 4.1. Structure and composition of Gadaa Councils of Boorana
Note. Based on Legesse (2006) and Kassa (2012)

In total, up to thirty-six councilors function as one body but are divided into *Arbooraa*, *Hawwaxaa*, and *Koonnoo* Councils (*Yaa'a*) and have varying levels of authority. The *Arbooraa* Council is composed of four *Hayyuu Aduulaa*, six *Hayyuu Meddhichaa*, and four *Hayyuu Garbaa*. It is the most authoritative Council. The two lateral Councils (*Hawwaxaa* and *Koonnoo /Kontomaa*) are constituted from one *Hayyuu Aduulaa*, six *hayyuu Meddhichaa*, and four *Hayyuu Garbaa* each. The *Abbaa Gadaa* Fiixxee and the two *Abbaa Gadaa Kontomaa* (all *hayyuu Aduulaa)* chair the three Councils. The *hayyuu Meddhichaa* are nominated by their clan assemblies. They are endorsed for the office by the incoming and outgoing *Aduulaa* Councils. By the virtue of being a member of the governing party (Gadaa), they can have delegated decision-making powers. The *Hayyuu Garbaa* are elected by each of the four remaining non-governing parties and serve as the opposition to both the *Arbooraa* and *Kontomaa* Councils. They are semi-retired former *Abbaa Gadaa*s or councilors (*hayyuu*). Be their experiences, they have referential powers. The Councils receive both their objections and recommendations respectfully. Besides, they could be assigned to lead the offices of *Abbaa*

Seeraa and *Abbaa Dubbii* in the customary e power-sharing scheme the governing Gadaa with the opposition. Every *hayyuu* can have about five advisors or assistants (*Jaallaba*) that he chooses. All *Hayyuu* serve for an eight-year term. *Figure 4.1.* illustrates the three branches of the *Aduulaa* Council.

Even though there exist minor variations in the number of *hayyuus* in the different sub-sections of Gadaa Councils and their nomenclatures among the Oromo of *Maccaa, Ituu, Karrayyuu, Arsii, Tuulamaa, Walloo*, and *Gujii*, the overall structure of the *Caffee* and the general practice of Gadaa System has remained the same. The need to adapt to specific local situations and challenges has been the driving force for the minor adaptions in the regional and local Gadaa institutions. It was in no way any variant of the national Gadaa institution. Gadaa System, as an indigenous Oromo democratic government serves as one national government of the Oromo with decentralized power allowing the Oromo to have a regional and local government under the central national government.

4.5. Endurance of the Gadaa System

4.5.1. Gadaa: A Survivor System

For many centuries before the formation of the kingdom of Abyssinia in the 13th century and its subsequent military confrontation with the Oromo starting from the first half of the 16th century, Gadaa System appears to have been a largely non-militarized system. As such, it has maintained the peace of the Oromo with each other and with the newly emerging peoples in the regions mainly from across the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden across the seas and from north inland to the heartland of *Oromo* country in the Horn of Africa region.

The pastoral and semi-agricultural livelihood of the Oromo and other peoples in this region gradually resulted in the socio-economic and religio-cultural dynamics that forced some pastoralist Oromo to move within the region from north to south and from east to west. The rest remained in present north-central Ethiopia. These later groups gradually succumbed to the influence of Islam and Christianity and their cultural elements up until the 15th century. In the mid-15th century, the largely pastoral Oromo initiated

the reformation of the Gadaa System to include militarism for the offensive-defense of the Oromo in general by introducing age-sets based recruitment and training of the large army.

Since the launching of the extensive Gadaa based offensive-defensive campaigned of the Oromo against the Christian kingdom of Abyssinians, the Islamic Sultanate of Adal and its principalities, and the Islamized Somali Clans in the early 16th century, the Gadaa government of the Oromo, with excessive emphasis to its militarism, started to enter the records of the Abyssinian kingdom. Since then, the Gadaa System has endured multiple attacks by the Abyssinian religious and political elites.

The Abyssinian historical records of the 16th century that have preserved the effectiveness of the Gadaa System as a form of government of the Oromo and their socio-political and military organization are mainly records of the kingdom of Abyssinia, which had begun expanding southwards to the heartland of the Oromo several centuries earlier. One of the Abyssinian Coptic Orthodox Christianity clergies started recording in the late 16th century some aspects of the Gadaa System as a unique system of government (having no kings or masters but elected leaders who serve only for eight years) practiced by the rival Christian kingdom and its Christian peoples. This was only after the Christian kingdom had suffered decisive defeats in the hands of the Oromo and driven back from the Oromo heartland rooted out from its occupation quarters. Historical records that have been conserved by the Abyssinian Church and state since the end of the 16th-century record that Gadaa guided the political, social, economic, warfare, ritual, and justice systems of the Oromo effectively. With all its complexity, sophistication, an array of structures, and multiple institutions, Gadaa not only has survived to the present time but also has become a heritage of humanity.

After the systemic political, economic, and social subjugation of the Oromo by the Abyssinians starting from the second half of the 19th century, the Gadaa System survived over a century-long repeated and sustained hegemonic literary attacks from the Abyssinian state, Abyssinian (Egyptian) Coptic Orthodox Church, and Abyssinian self-centered elites and their collaborators.

The reason for their attacks has been that the Gadaa System has been the noblest ideal of the Oromo that had helped them check, stop, and roll back the Abyssinian hegemonic expansion in the Horn of Africa for over four hundred years. Also, they attack it because the thought of it alone brings

back the excruciating fear to them, and they fear that its revival may bring back the unity and the triumph of the Oromo whereas the trauma of defeats of the kingdom of Abyssinia and the plight of its peoples in the 16th and early 17th centuries.

Abyssinian elites who have lived in the Oromo rural territories as *nafxanyaa* or in the urban centers in Oromo country like *Finfinnee* (Addis Ababa) were among the fierce attackers of the Gadaa System in particular and the Oromo culture and language in general. They did so either from fear or from love: the former was of the return of the Oromo hegemony while the latter was of the exceptional natural endowment of the country of the Oromo. For they love the country of the Oromo so much, they hated the Oromo, their culture, and their socio-political ideas even more. In addition to the misery the new land tenure system had yoked on the Oromo who had survived a genocide that reduced them to half to servitude and slavery, these elites relentlessly denigrated the Oromo so much so that some Oromo were forced to renounce their *Oromummaa* and changed their names and religions became assimilated Abyssinians. For they resided in the Oromo country, they feared the revival of the Gadaa System and the Oromo determination, that would uproot them from their comfort and would stop the continued migration of Abyssinians into the rich and luring Oromo country, but most importantly would restore the *kaawoo* of the Oromo. Being in this love-hate situation, some Abyssinian elites have continued to attack the Oromo culture, way of life, language, and most importantly the Gadaa System throughout their life with the deliberate intention of ensuring perpetual dominance of Abyssinians over the Oromo and other colonized peoples.

From the 1890s to 1991, Gadaa System remained one of the heavily masked pillars of the Oromo identity (*Oromummaa*) despite the banning, suppression, and several attempts to eradicate its symbolic manifestations by the successive governments who unsuccessfully tried to mold the Oromo into the Abyssinian identity and culture. Despite the imperial banning and subsequent marginalization of the Oromo culture, language, and identity by the Abyssinian rulers until 1974 and the mono-cultural, monolingual, and totalitarian administration of the socialist government until 1991, Gadaa System largely remained the core uniting factor of the Oromo culture being the main undercurrent Oromo cultural practice. This was particularly true in regions such as Central Oromia, Western Oromia, Northern Oromia, and Eastern Oromia where *Oromummaa* was dominated heavily by the imposed

Abyssinian identity, and the Oromo remained under tighter control of the mono-national oriented and Abyssinian centered governments.

Nonetheless, Gadaa System remained a parallel mainstream cultural and administrative practice in some regions of Oromia, such as Southern and South-Central Oromia inhabited by the *Boorana*, *Karrayyuu,* and *Gujii* Oromo. In this region, in some instances, the Gadaa Council of the *Booranaa* of southern Ethiopia had passed "judgments against Ethiopian Government officials" (Legesse, 2006, pp. 204–205). One typical example of such judgment occurred during 1975–91: *Garbiccha Liiban*, an Ethiopian Government official who dug up *Boorana* graves who refused to appear in front of the Gadaa Council (Gumii), was apprehended by *Gabra* Oromo in Kenya and was killed because of the decision of the *Gumii* (Legesse, 2006). Here, the dominance of the Habasha culture and state control were lighter.

In addition, in rural and remote areas across the Oromo country, some Oromo communities have kept their Gadaa practices and genuine Oromo identity. With some level of variation, Gadaa has been practiced continually among the rural *Ituu, Humbanaa, Maccaa, Tuulamaa*, and *Karrayyuu* Oromo. Nothing could destroy the Gadaa System of the Oromo.

The revival of the Gadaa System has remained to be the most feared political phenomenon by the Abyssinian members of the Ethiopian Federation in as much as it has remained the best hope of the Oromo under the present political arrangement that the Oromo nation has entered with other nations, nationalities, and peoples (NNPs) of the federation. Gadaa System shall remain the source of both fear and hope in the Ethiopian Federation. For the Oromo, Gadaa System shall remain the guarantor of their survival as a nation in the Ethiopian Federation and as hope and aspiration for full restoration of the Gadaa Democracy and the Oromo Father Land.

4.5.2. Adoption/Adaption of Gadaa System

During its journey since the 16th century, neighborly nations have adopted or adapted the Gadaa System. The neighborly people who have adopted or adapted the Gadaa System to their unique needs and social structures have received help from the ideas of Oromo democracy. The Oromo have generously shared their noble form of refined political thoughts and institutionalized republican form of government with others. The

Oromo have helped the neighboring nations of Konso, Gedeo,[17] Burji, Wolaita, Mursi, and Sidama in Ethiopia and Maasai, Nyika, Nabdi, and Sakuyye in Kenya, to adapt the Gadaa System varyingly as it fitted to their existing socio-political system and cultures. These nations and nationalities have made only slight changes. The Sidama, for example, called their adapted Gadaa System *Luwa,* from *Luba* in Oromo. The *Luwa* System has five forty years generational cycles, each proximately eight years, *Luwa* classes named *Mogisa, Fulasa, Wawasa, Darara,* and *Hirbora.* All are reminiscences of Oromo names and akin to the Oromo five parties (Gadaas*)* System. The mechanism of adaption of Gadaa by the others appears to be not hugely different from the Sidama. These peoples have been enjoying peace, stability, security, justice, and democratic government by the people based only on the rule of law.

These peoples had adopted or adapted the Oromo Democracy and freed themselves from the savagery of conflicts because it was a superb form of Democracy of their free will. The Oromo never tried to impose their Gadaa *System* on anyone (Gnamo, 2002). As they have liberty, though they always had the military power and massive population to crush and forcefully subdue the nations and nationalities they encountered, they treated every peaceful of them in the same way they would have liked to be treated. They love their liberty: hence, they never took it away from others. Instead, they let them share and adapt one of their inventions: a superb political system and an effective social organization.

4.5.3. Renewed Interest in Gadaa System

In this second decade of the 21st century, the Oromo Democracy has gained momentum as a competitive form of government. Social, anthropological, historical, religious, and political research in the Horn of Africa have now started to place their focuses on the Gadaa System. The *hayyuu* (scholars) of the Gadaa System have sharpened their knowledge of Gadaa that had been cast with the shadow of imposed alien government systems and its policies that partly banned the public practice of the Gadaa System in the last century. The young Oromo generation and emerging scholars have developed a huge interest to know their heritage and bringing it back to its former glory of the socio-political system of their State, Oromia. Their vision has become clearer in recent years: first, to enjoy Oromia

governed by the Gadaa Democracy; then, to see the Ethiopian Federation governed by Gadaa Democracy likewise. Other African nations have started to not only take pride in this indigenous African democracy but also consider it as a workable political alternative for the effective organization of the diverse societies of African nations. They seem to have realized that Gadaa democracy provides alternative solutions to the challenges that classical forms of democracies and other forms of political ideologies have failed to resolve.

4.5.4. Gadaa System: Heritage of Humanity

Since it appeared in the recorded history of Abyssinia in the early 16th century, there was no time in the history of the Oromo when the Gadaa System was abolished totally. Some Oromo communities, particularly the *Boorana,* the *Gujii,* and *Karrayyuu* Oromo have been governing themselves and their affairs effectively according to Gadaa Democracy despite being formally under the previous imperial and socialist governments and the present government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. If not as a form of independent government but as a form of traditional government and as a dominant socio-political culture, Gadaa System has been practiced across the present Oromia State without interruption.

Gadaa System has been preserved by the *Boorana* Oromo in its relative originality. The *Boorana* Oromo of southern Oromia are "prototypical Oromo traditionalist" (Schlee, 2008, p. 6). They have preserved the Gadaa System in its original form of practical application because they continued to practice it without interruption. They have kept full Gadaa Chronology from 1424 CE to the present day where seventy-four *Abbaa Gadaas* were elected to office (see Appendix). The Gadaa Chronology is "governed by many ingenious internal checks that prevent it from being distorted by faulty memory" (Legesse, 2006, p. 219).

Oromo democracy does exist, and the Oromo people practice it. It is currently functioning as a parallel system to the state system. From extensive field research among the *Boorana* Oromo of Ethiopia and Kenya, and academic reflection on Oromo Gadaa System and democracy for over a quarter of a century, a prominent African anthropologist, Asmarom Legesse (2006), asserts:

> Oromo democracy does indeed exist; that it is a polysepalous or multi-headed system of government, based on division of labor and a pattern of mutual regulation between the different institutions; and that it has had a long history during which the institutions changed, evolved, and adapted. (p. xxiii)

Indeed, the Gadaa System has now become a unique heritage of humanity. UNESCO has inscribed the Gadaa System in the "Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity." It inscribed it as "an indigenous democratic socio-political system of the Oromo." It did so on the eleventh session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage that took place in the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa's Conference Centre in Addis Ababa (Finfinnee), from 28 November to 2 December 2016. In its decision, the Intergovernmental Committee explains, "Gadaa is a traditional system of governance used by the Oromo people in Ethiopia, which functions in conjunction with the state system."[18]

The Oromo nation that has made an egalitarian democratic government system its culture for centuries for millennia, has now brought it to the stage of global heritage. No nation has ever made a democratic government system its cultural heritage that the UN acknowledges and registers as the heritage of humanity. The Gadaa System is a unique inventory in the UNESCO records. It is the only heritage that is registered as a culture of a nation and an intangible heritage of humanity being a government system. The Oromo nation now has a truly democratic government system that has become an "intangible cultural heritage of humanity." Building their separate identity from the ancient empire of Kush through long socio-political transformation, as did some other Cushitic language-speaking peoples in the region, the Oromo have not only survived in their ancestral region as an indigenous people throughout their long history but also preserved one of the ancient civilizations of Kush in the form of Gadaa Government, which has now become a heritage of humanity.[19]

The rest of the world now has the second opportunity to recognize, and perhaps adapt, this unique form of a democratic and republican form of government invented and perfected by the Oromo to the known best form of humane government. There is no doubt those other inventions of the Oromo, namely *Gumaa, Moggaasaa, Araara, etc.* would become known as

Gadaa and help and inspire the rest of humanity; and perhaps enjoyed by the world like the coffee: one of the gifts of the Oromo to the world.

4.6. Summary

No one doubts Gadaa System is one of the oldest republican political systems created by humanity. It could be the oldest political system created based on the free will of the people. Oromo Oral traditions suggest that the Gadaa System might be a few millennia old. However, there is no agreement among the oral traditions as to how old Gadaa System is. What could be agreed to is this: Gadaa System is at least twenty-five centuries old.

The recorded history of the practice of the Gadaa System among the Oromo spans over centuries. In the late 16th century, an Abyssinian monk wrote that the Oromo had no king or master but elected their leaders every eight years. In the early 17th century, Jerome Lobo witnessed the Gadaa government at work in Malindi, modern southeast Kenya. In the 18th century, James Bruce detailed how the Oromo elected democratically their representatives and the representatives elected their leader involving varieties of votes. As early as in the 1840s, some politicians have confirmed that Gadaa, as a republican form of government, is a superior form of the political system. In the first half of the 19th century, Walter C. Plowden considered the *Gudurru* Oromo Gadaa practice as the measure of the republican system of government. He attested that "among republican systems, Gadaa is superior," (Plowden, 1868, as cited in Melbaa, 1988, p. 15), and it was "nearly as pure a republic as can exist" (Plowden, 1868, p. 307). Similarly, Antoine D' Abbadie illuminates that each of the local governments of the *Maccaa* Oromo, including the *Gudurru*, which he had observed operated as a republic: each had *Caffee*, elected *Luba* Council, and elected Government officials. In the late 19th century, Élisée Reclus (1890) recorded that the eastern Oromo, the *Ituu*, had the same republican form of government as the western Oromo, the *Gudurru*. Since the dawn of the 20th century, numerous scholars who studied the Gadaa System could only confirm that Gadaa System has been a democratic and republican form of government of the Oromo with almost uniform practice across the Oromo country.

Since it was brought to the light of written history at the end of the 16th century, Gadaa democracy has been through highs and lows. It has endured

multiple systemic attacks over centuries. Though it had continued to thrive as a republican form of government among the mainstream Oromo in the 17th and 18th centuries, it was banned in the late 19th century after the Oromo fell under the subjugation of the kingdom of Abyssinian. Since the beginning of the 20th century, direct or indirect pieces of research have been conducted on the Gadaa System. The prominent ones from among them have produced outstanding research reports. These reports have kindled the hope that it would revive. Since the first decade of the 21st century, the Oromo appear to be determined to revive fully the practice of their noble System. The result of one of these determinations manifested itself by the ascription of the Gadaa System as an intangible cultural heritage of the Oromo by UNESCO. It has now become the heritage of humanity.

The Gadaa System is an alternative, a better alternative if its few obvious limitations are rectified, to modern Western democracy. Multiple nations in the Horn of Africa have adopted or adapted the Gadaa System. This is a sign that the System is one of the sought-after systems. More and more nations in the region, or outside of the region, might adapt or adopt it as they see fit into their socio-political situation and as they realize its potentials in constituting a democratic and egalitarian socio-political system that works for everyone.

Notes to Chapter 4

[1] Gidada (2016) offers an exceedingly rare alternative meaning. Among the Sayyoo Oromo, *guulaa* is the name given to retired Luba until they attain *Gadamoojjii*. In other words, *guulaa* are *Yuba I-IV* among Sayyoo. This, however, is not common and it could be misrepresentation or misinterpretation.

[2] Some scholars (for example Gemetchu Megersa and Asafa Jalata) have defined "*finna*" as "Oromo concept of social development." However, *finna* is more than just a concept of social development. It includes the concept of economic development. The names of the progressive *finna* are socio-economic to the least and all-inclusive to the best. Thus, *finna* may be better defined as "Oromo concept of socio-economic development."

[3] Oromo polities keep a strict history of their Gadaa as a chronology of their *Abbaa Gadaas* bearing in mind the number of Gadaas they have passed in the memorable past. From the reformation of the Gadaa System at *Madda Walaabuu* in the mid-15th century to date, the *Booranaa* and *Karrayyuu* Oromo have reached respectively the 71st and 74th uninterrupted chronological peaceful transfer of Gadaa power. This is a chronology of six hundred years

[4] A detailed account of Makko Bili is presented by Negaso Gidada in his book *የኦሮሞ ሕዝብ ታሪክ* (History of the Oromo), (Surafel Girma Tarn., 1st Ed., Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, The Printing House). According to Gidada (2016), it is not clear whether Makko Bili was *Abbaa Duula* or *Abba Bokkuu*. Nevertheless, he is a giant historical figure among the *Maccaa* Oromo; they credit him for multiple roles of leadership, administration, and chief justice. He was master of the Oromo culture (*aadaa*), religion (*Waaqeffannaa*), worldview, mode of thinking, and traditional justice system. Oral traditions hold that most of the customary laws of the *Maccaa* were made at *Odaa Bisil* during his Gadaa.

[5] Among the *Boorana* of Southern *Booranaa*, *Gogeessa* also refers to the duration between the *Gadaa* of a father and his son, which is forty years and hence considered as one *Gadaa* generation.

[6] For the generation of sons, there were some variations as to the name of the Gadaas between the *Booranaa* and *Baarentuu* first moieties.

[7] Based on an interview with Shagirdi Bukoo in 1974, Negaso Gidada notes, "*Oboo*" and "*Cooraa*" indicate the class and honor differences between successive generations among the *Sayyoo* Oromo of *Wallagaa* (Gidada 2016). This, however, could be regarded as partial misinterpretation. The concept of class was alien to the egalitarian Oromo society. Even if it were about class, how it would apply to

successive generations is not clear. What is clear is that *Hoboo* and *Cooraa* are internal opposition within the same party.

[8] For details and illustration, see *Fig 4.1. Oromo moieties replicated and/or rebuilt* in Legesse (2006).

[9] Other such moieties of the Oromo who have moved farther away from the core center of the present Oromo country may exist throughout the east and northeast Africa, even in the central and Sahel region of Africa, yet to be discovered.

[10] The most commonly known Oromo kin structure in descent is First Moiety (*Oromoo*), Junior Moiety (*Booranaa* and *Baarentuu*), Sub-Moiety (Maccaa and Tuulamaa, Siikkoo and Mandoo, etc.), gosaa, qomoo, aanaa, mana, balbala guddaa, balabal xiqqaa, and warra. However, there are several alternative kinship structures offered by scholars in the context of their uses in different regions within Oromia. Nonetheless, it is almost impossible to fully and accurately reconstruct such a kin structure of almost fifty million Oromo.

[11] The internal evaluations of the ruling party in Oromo democracy are similar in intent to the political party internal evaluations common among the parties that are guided by a centralized decision-making system. The Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)'s, the ruling party in Ethiopia since 1991, *gimgema*, for example, is a party internal evaluation system based on the political ideology of revolutionary democracy and the central decision-making system of democratic centralism. However, such parties have not even a single party to compete with an equal footing let alone four other equally strong, equally popular, and equally sized democratic parties to which the whole nation is distributed naturally and randomly as a member. *Gimgema* is a poor adaption just since a quarter of a century ago from the genuine ruling party evaluation system (*Qorannoo*) of the Oromo. *Qorannoo* (internal review of the *Gadaa* leaders by members of the gogeessa, *Gadaa* Party) has been in practice at least for the last five hundred years in the *Gadaa* System of the Oromo.

[12] Luba is used here to refer to those who are in Gadaa-grade and therefore are *Luba* but do not hold higher office or any office because they have elected others from among them who have become *Abbaa Gadaas* to hold office. As they belong to Gadaa grade, they are *Abbaa Gadaas*, though. They have ritual roles in their respective communities and their households.

[13] There are some reports that the *Karrayyuu* Oromo have tackled some aspects of this drawback by introducing a slightly different form of membership. Instead of all male children becoming a member of the party of their father, only the eldest son becomes a member of his father's party. Others join subsequent parties according to their order of birth. In such a case, if the father is a member of *Malbaa* and has given birth to six children, the first and the last would belong to *Malbaa* while the

others would belong to the reminder four parties, one each, in the order of their birth. Even then, it does not solve the problem of involuntary membership to a party.

[14] See http://www.*Gadaa*.com/oromocalendar.html for details of the Oromo calendar. For the findings of Lynch and Robbins, see Lynch and Robbins (May 1978). Namoratunga: The First Archeoastronomical Evidence in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Science*, 200 (19).

[15] For details of the research finding, see the doctoral dissertation "Knowledge, Identity, and the Colonization Structure: The Case of Oromo in East and Northeast Africa," submitted by Gemetchu Megerssa to the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London, 1993.

[16] D' Abbadie also made some very interesting comparisons where he emphasized the on-air punctuation marks of the Oromo with the written Abyssinian punctuation marks and discipline of European assemblies. He suggests that both Abyssinians and Europeans should learn from the Oromo on-air punctuations, the disciple, and the decorum of their assemblies. He writes:

> Ethiopian scribes have lost the usage of their comma, and are remarkable for the unconstraint with which they distribute their dot (punctuation) marks. In our country, on the contrary, we are strict as regards the written punctuation, but all like those thoughtless scribes, we could take some lessons from the Oromo as regards the emphatic punctuation of their speeches. A small beat indicates the comma; stronger beats mark the semicolon, the colon, and some other nuances that we feel without having to think to write them. The period is clacked with a serious and decisive manner. The question mark is clearly enunciated not only by voice, but further by a strident and well-known sound. I let you imagine a point of exclamation clacked with many repeats by this warrior orator. Standing and his toga extended as far as his left hand that was supported by the spear, Shumi [an advocate of a new bill/legal proposition] spoke for hours. Seated in front of him and half covered with his toga, the chief of the opposition listened in respectful silence but with a look that I believed was of a powerful rage. When the orator finished, the assembly kept quiet for a long while in order to allow him to continue his speech if he then recalled an omitted argument. In these oratorical contests of Africa, there is always a natural dignity and decorum that we would like to see in the turbulent chambers of Europe where the wisest have sometimes regretted untimely vivacity. (D'Abbadie, 2007, pp. 129-130)

[17] Indeed, the Gedeo people, according to the myth of their origin, are Oromo descents. Today, the Gedeo people are no different from the surrounding Oromo people in every aspect of social identity and culture. Gedeo Zone was incorporated in SNNP State though it is an enclave in Oromia State. The Gedeo people were divided on the choice of the State but some were encouraged to join the SNNP for a promised political advantage. The promise was the opportunity of being incorporate as a Special Zone that was believed to give the Gedeo people more autonomy and secured self-administration. The divide had caused some conflicts where many lives were lost in the early years of the state restructuring in Ethiopia.

[18] Decision of the Intergovernmental Committee, 11.COM 10.B.11. Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/decisions/11.COM/10.B.11

[19] For details see *Gadaa* system, an indigenous democratic socio-political system of the Oromo at http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/gada-system-an-indigenous-democratic-socio-political-system-of-the-oromo-01164

Appendix

Abbaa Gadaas of *Boorana* Oromo: 1457–2025

Abbaa Gadaa Fiixxee (First *Abbaa Gadaa*)	*Gogeessa*/Party (Government)	Duration (Office term)
Gadayoo Galgalo	*Fullaasa*	1457–1465
Yaayyaa Fulleelle Yaayyaaa	*Mardiida*	1465–1473
Jaarsoo Baabboo	*Daraara*	1473–1481
Dawwaa Borbor	*Libaasa*	1481–1489
Diida Nam-dur	*Sabbaaqa*	1489–1497
Areeroo Boruu Bakkalchaa	*Moggisa*	1497–1505
Tiitillee Dullachaa	*Maakula*	1505–1513
Lukkoo Jaarsoo Baabboo	*Fullaasa*	1513–1521
Borbor Dawwaa Borbor	*Mardiida*	1521–1529
Aagaa Raagee Kalee	*Daraara*	1529–1537
Dagalee Yaayyaa	*Libaasa*	1537–1545
Ososa Tiitillee Dullachaa	*Sabbaaqa*	1545–1553
Boruu Lukkuu Jaarsoo	*Moggisa*	1553–1561
Abbayyii Horoo	*Maakula*	1561–1569
Bididhoqqee Rasoo Booroo	*Fullaasa*	1569–1577
Orroo Dullacha Yaayyaa	*Mardiida*	1577–1585
Yaayyaa Oolee Bonayyaa	*Daraara*	1585–1693
Dooyyoo Boroo Lukkuu	*Libaasa*	1593–1601
Baacoo Nadhoo	*Sabbaaqa*	1601–1609
Urgumeessa Igguu	*Moggisa*	1609–1617
Baabboo Orroo Dullachaa	*Maakula*	1617–1625
Baabboo Sibuu Beerree	*Fullaasa*	1625–1633
Hindhaalee Dooyyoo Boroo	*Mardiida*	1633–1641
Acuu Abbiyyuu	*Darara*	1641–1649

Aabbuu Laku Mormaa	*Libasa*	1649–1657
Abbayyii Baabboo Orroo	*Sabbaaqa*	1657–1665
Aallee Kuraa Yaayyaa	*Moggisa*	1665–1673
Wayyuu Urdu Malleellee	*Maakula*	1673–1681
Morowwaa Abbayii Aasaa	*Fullaasa*	1681–1689
Gobbaa Allaa Nuuraa	*Mardiida*	1689–1697
Daawwee Gobbuu Yaayyaa	*Daraara*	1697–1705
Jaarsoo Hiddoo Yaayyaa	*Libaasa*	1705–1713
Walee Waaccuu Roqaa	*Sabbaqa*	1713–1721
Soraa Dhaddachaa Iluu Mleekkoo	*Moggisa*	1721–1729
Dhaddacha Róbale Guyyoo	*Maakula*	1729–1737
Halakee Doyyoo Harreellee	*Fullaasa*	1737–1745
Guyyoo Geedoo Walee	*Mardiida*	1785–1753
Madha Boruu Daadoy	*Daraara*	1753–1761
Soraa Diidoo Qarsaa/ Dhaddacha Odaa Morowwaa	*Libaasa*	1761–1779
Soraa Guyyoo Balqaa/ Bulee Dhaddacha Róobale	*Sabbaaqa*	1769–1777
Liiban Waata Nafur	*Moggisa*	1777–1785
Waayyuu Raallee Canaa	*Maakula*	1785–1793
Boruu Madha Boruu	*Fullaasa*	1793–1801
Ungulee Halakee Sadee	*Mardiida*	1801–1809
Saaqqoo Dhaddacha Gaamduu	*Daraara*	1809–1817
Jiloo Nyeencoo Soraa	*Libaasa*	1817–1825
Dooyyoo Madheera Liiban/ Socorre Annaa Borbor	*Sabbaaqa*	1825–1833
Madha Boruu Madhaa	*Moggisaa*	1833–1841
Liiban Jiloo Adhaawaa	*Makula*	181–1849
Jaldeessa Guyyoo Dabbasaa	*Fullaasa*	1849–1857
Dooyyoo Jiloo Nyeecoo /	*Mardiida*	1857–1865

Nuuraa Shunkaa Dhaddachaa		
Haroo Adii Liiban	*Daraara*	1865–1873
Diida Bittaataa Maammoo	*Libaasa*	1873–1881
Guyyoo Boruu Ungulee	*Sabbaaqa*	1881–1889
Liiban Jaldeessa Guyyoo	*Moggisa*	1889–1897
Adii Doyyoo Jiloo	*Maakula*	1897–1905
Boruu Galma Dooyoo	*Fulllaasa*	1905–1913
Boruu Diida Bittaataa/ Liiban Kusee Liiban	*Mardiida*	1913–1921
Areeroo Geedoo Liiban	*Daraara*	1921–1929
Bulee Dabbasaa Bulee	*Libaasa*	1929–1937
Aagaa Adi Dooyyoo/ Taadhotee Adii Dooyyoo	*Sabbaaqa*	1937–1945
Guyyoo Boruu Galmaa	*Moggisa*	1945–1953
Madha Galmaa Toree	*Maakula*	1953–1961
Jaldeessa Liiban Guyyoo	*Fullaasa*	1961–1969
Gobbaa Bulee Dabbasaa	*Mardiida*	1969–1977
Jiloo Aagaa Adii	*Daraara*	1977–1985
Boruu Guyyoo Boruu	*Liibaasa*	1985–1993
Boruu Madha Galmaa	*Sabbaaqa*	1993–2001
Liiban Jaldeessa Liiban	*Moggisa*	2001–2009
Guyo Goba Bule	*Fullaasa*	2010–2017
Kuraa Jaarsoo		2017–2025

Note. Leggesse (2000, 2006), Kassa (2012)

References

Ayana, D. (2015, September). *Notes on cinnamon country and the "Peace of Jamjam": Towards a reconstruction of ancient Oromo history.* Retrieved September 14, 2015, from http://finfinnetribune.com

Ayana, D. (2016). *[Review of the book, የኦሮሞ እና የኣማራ እውነተኛ የዘር ምንጭ by Fikre T. Jigsa.]. Book Review: Fikre T. Jigsa, 'The True origin of the Oromo and Amhara" (Addis Ababa: 2008 E.C).* Retrieved on 02 February 2017 from http://www.ayyaantuu.net

Baba, Y. M. (2015, October). *The Oromo Concept of Reality or Dhugaa-Ganama (Part I-VII).* Retrieved on 02 February 2017 from http://finfinnetribune.com/Gadaa/2015/10/yoseph-mulugeta-baba-ph-d-the-oromo-concept-of-reality-or-dhugaa-ganama/

Baissa, L. (2004). The Oromo Gada system of government: An indigenous African democracy. In A. Jalata (Ed.), *State crisis, globalization, and national movements in north-east Africa* (pp. 101-122). London & New York: Rutledge.

Bassi, M. (1996). Power's Ambiguity or the Political Significance of Gadaa. In P.T.W. Baxter, Jan Hultin, Alessandro Triulzi, (Eds.), *Being and Becoming Oromo, Historical and anthropological Enquiries* (pp. 150-161). Uppsala, Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.

Bassi, M. (2005). *Decisions in the shade: Political and juridical processes among the Oromo-Borana* (Cynthia Slavadoi, Trans.). Trenton, NJ and Asmara, Eritrea: The Red Sea Press. [Originally published in 1996]

Bassi, M. and Tache, B. (2005). The Oromo eschatology: The prophesy of Areeroo Boosaroo narrated by Borbor Bulee and Guyyoo Dambii. *Journal of Oromo Studies*, *12* (1-2), 174-222.

Birru. L. (2011), Sisai Ibssa: An Oromo man. *Journal of Oromo Studies*, *18*(1), 43-80.

Beke, C. T. (1845, April). On the languages and dialects of Abyssinia and the countries to the south. *Philological Society*, *2*(33), 89–107. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-968X.1845.tb00048.x/pdf

Bokku, D. D. (2011). *Oromo wisdom in black civilization*. Finfinne, Ethiopia: Finfinne Printing & Publishing S.C.

Bruce, J. (1790). *Select Specimens of Natural History Collected in Travels to Discover the Source of Nile in Egypt, Arabia, Abyssinia, and Nubia* (Volume VI). (Digitized by Google) [e-book]. Retrieved from http://www.mindserpent.com/American_History/books/Bruce/1790_bruce_travels_to_discover_the_source_of_the_nile_vol_6_of_6.pdf

Bruce, J. (1791). *Travels to Discover the Source of Nile, In the Years 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772, and 1773* (*Volume II*) [e-book]. Retrieved from http://www.mindserpent.com/American_History/books/Bruce/1790_bruce_travels_to_discover_the_source_of_the_nile_vol_2_of_6.pdf

Bulcha, M. (1996). The survival and reconstruction of Oromo national identity. In Baxter, P.T.W, Hultin, J., & Triulzi, A. (Eds.), *Being and becoming Oromo: Historical and anthropological enquiries* (pp. 48-67). Uppsala, Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.

Cerulli, E. (1922). *The folk-literature of the Oromo of southern Abyssinia* (Part I & II) (E. A. Hooton & Natica I. Bates, Eds., Ruth Otis Sawtell, Ass. Ed.). Cambridge, MA, USA: The African Department of the Peabody Museum of Harvard University.

Chala, D.G. (2017). Indigenous federation: The case of Borana Oromo, Ethiopia. *The International Indigenous Policy Journal, 8*(1). http://dx.doi.org/10.18584/iipj.2017.8.1.2

D' Abbadie, A. (2007 [1880]). On the Oromo: Great African nation often designated under the name "Galla" (Ayalew Kanno, Trans.). *Journal of Oromo Studies*, *14* (1). 117-146.

Delebo, L. G. (1982 Eth. C.). **የኢትዮጵያ ረጅም የሕዝብና የመንግስት ታሪክ** (አንደኛ መጽሐፍ) ። አዲስ አበ ፥ኢትዮጵያ፤ ንግድ ማተሚያ ቤት።

Duressa, A. (2002). *Guddifachaa*: *Adoption practices in Oromo society with particular reference to the Borana Oromo* (Master's thesis, Addis Ababa University: Ethiopia). Retrieved from http://etd.aau.edu.et/handle/123456789/3059?show=full

Geda, G. J. (2007). *The Faraqasa indigenous pilgrimage center: History and ritual practices*. (Master's Thesis, University of Tromsø, Norway).

Geshe, B. L. (2013a, March). Beyond universalism-cultural relativism debate: Potentials of the Gadaa System for legitimizing human rights of women. *Ethiopian Journal of Human Rights*, *I*, 41-85.

Geshe, B. L. (2013b, March). *Local characteristics under Ethiopian and South Africa's constitution: Gada as a foundation of the state constitution of Oromia. (LLM Short Thesis, CEU eTD Collection)*. Budapest, Hungary: Central European University.)

Gidada, N. (2016) ። **የኦሮሞ ሕዝብ ታሪክ**። (Surafel Girma, Tarn.) (**የመጀመርያ እትም**) አዲስ አበባ ፥ኢትዮጵያ።Author.

Gnamo, A. H. (2002). Islam, the Orthodox Church and Oromo nationalism (Ethiopia). *Cahiers d'études Africaines*, 165, 99–120. Retrieved from http://etudesafricaines.revues.org/ document137.html

Haberland, E. (1992). The Horn of Africa. In B. A. Ogot (Ed.), *General History of Africa V: Africa from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century* (pp. 703–749). Heinemann, CA, USA: UNESCO.

Hassen, M. (2003). Shaykh Baktii Saphalo (1895-1980): A prolific scholar and a great Oromo nationalist. *Journal of Oromo Studies*, *10*(1-2), 135-178.

Hassen, M. (2008). The Egyptian occupation of Harer and its impact on the Oromo of Harerge. *Journal of Oromo Studies*, *15*(2), 33-60.

Hidoto, Y. C. (2010, spring). *The quest for autonomy and politicisation of differences in Ethiopia: The case of the Alle ethnic minority*. (Master's Thesis University of Tromsø, Norway.)

Hinew, D. (2012, July-September). History of Oromo social organization: Gada grades-based roles and responsibilities. *Science, Technology and Arts Research (STAR) Journal*, *1*(3), 97-105.

Holcomb, B. K. (2004). Contending democracies: US-sponsored 'democracy' encounters indigenous Oromo democratic forms. In A. Jalata (Ed.), *State crisis, globalization, and national movements in north-east Africa* (pp. 122-165). London & New York: Routledge.

Houston, D. D. (1926 [2004]). *Wonderful Ethiopians of the Ancient Cushite Empire* (*Book I).* Retrieved from http://www.sacred-texts.com/afr/we/we01.htm

Idossa, D. C., Awlachew, S. B., Namara, R. E., Babel, M. S., and Gupta, A. D. (2007). Indigenous system of conflict resolution in Oromia, Ethiopia. In B. van Koppen, M- Giordano, and J- Butterworth (Eds.) *Community-based Water Law and Water Resources Management Reform in Developing Countries* (pp. 146-157). London, UK: CAB International.

Jalata, A. (1996). The Struggle for Knowledge: The Case of Emergent Oromo Studies. (First published in *African Studies Review*, *39* (2), 95-123). Retrieved from http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_socopubs/93

Jalata, A. (1998). *Oromo nationalism and the Ethiopian discourse: The search for freedom and democracy*. Asmara, Eritrea: The Red Sea Press

Jalata, A. (1999, September). The struggle for knowledge: The case of emergent Oromo studies. *African Studies Review*, *39* (2), 95-123.

Jalata, A. (2004). Process of state formation in the Horn of Africa in a comparative perspective. In A. Jalata (Ed.), *State crisis, globalization, and national movements in north-east Africa* (pp. 1-30). London & New York: Routledge.

Jalata, A. (2005). *Oromo and Ethiopia: State formation and ethnonational conflict, 1868-2004*. Trenton & Asmara: The Red Sea Press, Inc.

Jalata, A. (2012, March). Gadaa (Oromo democracy): An example of classical African civilization. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, *5*(1), 126-152.

Jalata, A. (2005). State terrorism and globalization: The cases of Ethiopia and Sudan. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, *46*(1–2), 79–102.

Jalata, A. (2014). Promoting and developing Oromummaa. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, *6*(8), 119-145.

Jirata, T. J. (2013). *Children and oral tradition among the Guji-Oromo in southern Ethiopia* (Doctoral Thesis, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, NTNU, Trondheim). Retrieved from https://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/269081/638430_FULLTEXT02.pdf?sequence=2

Haile, G. (2002). *የ አባ ባህርይ ድርሰቶች ፤ ኦሮሞችን ከሚመለከቱ ሌሎች ሰነዶች ጋር* [The works of Abba Bahrey and other documents concerning the Oromo]. College Ville, Minnesota, USA: Author.

Kassa, G.N. (2012). Gada theory and practice (Part I-III). A paper presented at the Oromo Study Association (OSA) annual conference at the University of Minnesota, USA. 14th-15th July 2012. Retrieved from http://www.ayyaantuu.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Gada-Theory-and-Practices_PDF1-1.pdf

Kedir, G. (2016, December 21). Ethiopia: Key background information on Gadaa System. *The Ethiopian Herald.* Retrieved from http://www.ethpress.gov.et/herald/index.php/society/item/7077-key-background-information-on-Gadaa-system

Kelbessa, W. (2010). *Indigenous and modern environmental ethics: a study of the indigenous Oromo environmental ethics and modern issues of environment and development.* Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.

Keller, E. J. (1998). Regime change and Ethno-regionalism in Ethiopia: The case of the Oromo. In A. Jalata (Ed.), *Oromo nationalism and the*

Ethiopian discourse: The search for freedom and democracy, (pp 109-124). Asmara, Eritrea: Red Sea Press.

Kenea, G. (2018). The new Gojjame rule and the Oromo resistance in Abbay Choman, north east Wallaga, Oromiya, Ethiopia, 1850s-1882. *African Journal of History and Culture*, *10*(5), 57-66. http://dx.doi.org/10.5897/AJHC2018.0403.

Keneni, T. (2013). Exploring Gumaa as an indispensable psycho-social method of conflict resolution and justice administration. *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, *13*(1),

Lata, L. (1998). Peculiar challenges to Oromo nationalism. In A. Jalata (Eds.) *Oromo nationalism and the Ethiopian discourse: The search for freedom and democracy* (pp. 125-152). Lawrenceville, NJ, USA: The Red Sea Press.

Legesse, A. (1973). *GADA: Three approaches to the study of African societies*. New York, NY, USA: The Free Press.

Legesse, A. (2000) *Oromo democracy: An indigenous African political system* [Limited Edition] Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press.

Legesse, A. (2006). *Oromo democracy: An indigenous African political system* [Full Edition] Asmara, Eritrea: The Red Sea Press.

Levine, D. N. (1974). *Greater Ethiopia: The evolution of a multi-ethnic society*. Chicago, IL, USA: The University of Chicago Press.

Levine, D. N. (2007). Oromo narratives. *Journal of Oromo Studies, 14* (2), 43-63.

Lobo, J. (1887). *A voyage to Abyssinia.* (Samuel Johnson, Trans, Henry Morley Ed.) [e-book]. Retrieved from http://intersci.ss.uci.edu/wiki/eBooks/BOOKS/Johnson/Voyage_to_Abyssinia_Lobo.pdf

Mamo, D. F. (2017). Indigenous mechanisms as a foundation for AfSol comprehension: Lessons from Gadaa System of the Oromo nation in

Ethiopia. *Sociology and Anthropology*, *5*(5), 379-387. http://dx.doi.org/10.13189/sa.2017.050501.

Marcus, H. G. (1994). *A history of Ethiopia.* Retrieved from http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft109nb00g/

Megerssa, G. (1993). *Knowledge, identity, and the colonizing structure: The case of the Oromo in East and Northeast Africa* (Doctoral dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London).

Melba, G. (1988). *Oromia: An introduction.* Khartoum, Sudan: Author.

moiety. (n. d.). In *Roget's 21st Century Thesaurus* (3rd ed.). Retrieved February 15, 2017, from Thesaurus.com website http://www.thesaurus.com/browse/moiety

Mole, B. G. (2014). *Historical politics of Oromo Liberation Front: Ethnicity, nationalism, and stability in the Horn of Africa.* (Master's thesis, Norwegian School of Theology, Norway).

OBN [Oromia Broadcasting Network]: *Sirna Gadaa Oromoo.* Retrieved March 12, 2018, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7UsYno_PO5c

Pankhurst, R. (1997). *The Ethiopian borderlands: Essay in regional history from ancient times to the end of the 18th century*. Lawrenceville, GA, USA: The Red Sea Press.

Plowden, W. C. (1868). *Travels in Abyssinia and the Galla country.* London, UK: Longmans.

Plowden, W. C. (2011). *Travels in Abyssinia and the Galla country: With an account of a mission to Ras Ali in 1848* (T. C. Plowden, Ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Reclus, E. (1890). *The Earth and its inhabitants: Africa (Vol. IV, South and East Africa)* (A. H. Keane, Ed.) [e-book]. Retrieved from http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bright/reclus/Earth/africatheearth04recluoft.pdf

Reclus, E. (1892). *The Earth and its inhabitants: Africa (Vol. I, North-East Africa*) (A. H. Keane, Ed.) [e-book]. Retrieved from http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bright/reclus/Earth/africatheearth01recluoft.pdf

Schlee, G. (2008). Ethnopolitics and Gabra origins. Working Paper No.103, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology. Retrieved June 11, 2015, from http://www.eth.mpg.de/pubs/wps/pdf/mpi-eth-working-paper-0103.pdf

Sirna, Z. T. (2012). *Ethiopia: When Gada democracy rules in a federal state. Bringing indigenous institutions of governance to modern democracy*. (Master's thesis, University of Tromsø, Norway). Retrieved from http://munin.uit.no/bitstream/handle/10037/5080/thesis.pdf;sequence=2

Tafla, B. (Ed.). (1987). Asma *Giyorgis and his work: History of the Galla and the Kingdom of Sawa*. Stuttgart, Germany: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH.

Teso, A. B, Hamado, L. K., and Chalenka, G. T. (2016). An investigation of participatory governance embedded in Gadaa system: Manbadha general assembly of the Arsii Oromo in focus. *Journal of Languages and Culture*, *7* (10), 93-104. http://dx.doi.org/10.5897/JLC2016.0371

Verharen, C. C. (2013). Comparing Oromo and ancient Egyptian philosophy. In Bekele Gutema & Charles C. Verharen (Eds.), *Philosophy in Africa now: African philosophy in Ethiopia* (pp. 185–201). Retrieved from http://www.crvp.org/publications/Series-II/15-Contents.pdf

Index

Å

aadaa, *44*, *64*, *136*, *138*, 157, 163, 165, 169, 173, *192*, *196*, *204*, 243
aanaa, *185*

A

Abba Bahrey, *132*, 164, *213*, *217*, *218*, *230*
Abbaa Alangaa, XII
Abbaa Bokkuu, XII, 47, 52, 109, 170, 221, 227
Abbaa Cibraa, *145*, *219*
Abbaa Dubbii, *185*, *225*, *234*
Abbaa Duulaa, XII, 19, 42, 43, 46, 94, 95, 96, 146, 149, 150, 185, 219, 223, 225, 227
Abbaa Fugnoo, *152*
Abbaa Gadaa, XII, *7*, *24*, *30*, *31*, *34*, *35*, *38*, *39*, *40*, *42*, *46*, *47*, *48*, *52*, *53*, *54*, *58*, *61*, *74*, *75*, *76*, *77*, *78*, *87*, *88*, *89*, *95*, *98*, *99*, *100*, *101*, *103*, *104*, *107*, *108*, 109, *122*, *125*, *132*, *137*, *143*, *147*, *148*, *149*, *150*, *152*, *153*, *154*, 156, 163, 167, *190*, *191*, *192*, *193*, *194*, *195*, *196*, *200*, *201*, *204*, *205*, *206*, *210*, *212*, *217*, *219*, *220*, *221*, *222*, *223*, *224*, *225*, *227*, *231*, *232*, *233*, *247*
Abbaa Muudaa, XIII, *94*, *122*, *199*
Abbaa Qabiiyyee, *152*
Abbaa Sa'aa, *137*, *152*, *185*, *225*
Abbaa Seeraa, XIII, *63*, *137*, *152*, *153*, 166, 167, *225*, *234*
Abbas Haji Gnamo, *228*
Abdullahi Shongolo, *228*
accountability, *94*, *95*, *133*, *196*
addicted to election, 176
administration of justice, *23*, *184*, *185*
adoption, *X*, *24*, *30*, *45*, *68*, *69*, 109, *112*
Aduulaa, XIII, 26, 29, 34, 35, 38, 39, 40, 47, 49, 58, 61, 62, 63, 74, 75, 76, 86, 87, 98, 104, 137, 138, 148, 151, 154, 162, 182, 191, 194, 206, 231, 232, 233
Afaan Oromoo, *VIII*, XI, *179*, *189*
Afarsaataa, *126*
Afarsataa, 44
afro, 44
afroo, 31
age-set, 2, 4, 6, 7, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 23, 24, 25, 28, 42, 44, 65, 66, 71, 102, 103, 104, 108, 135, 155, 159, 205, 212
age-sets, *XIII*, *XIV*, *1*, *2*, *3*, *4*, *5*, *6*, *7*, *8*, *9*, *10*, *12*, *13*, *14*, *15*, *21*, *22*, *24*, *58*, *65*, *70*, *79*, *85*, *86*, *87*, *88*, *92*, *96*, *102*, *103*, *108*, *113*, *135*, *137*, *144*, *145*, *150*, 155, 161, 162, 176, 178, *181*, *184*, *186*, *187*, *206*, *208*, *210*, *230*, *235*
alangaa, 122
Alemayehu Haile, *228*
Alessandro Triulzi, *228*
allegories, *16*
alliance of alternating groups, *102*
amantaa, 44
American classical democracy, *210*
Ammachiisaa, 27
Arboora, *197*
Arbooraa, *151*, *196*, *197*, *231*, *232*, *233*
argaa-dageettii, *214*
Arsi confederacy, *199*
Arsii, XI, 59, 60, 118, 142, 222, 234, 258
Asaboo, 118
Asafa Jalata, *116*, *180*, *228*, *255*
Asmarom Legesse, *92*, *94*, *180*, *228*, 230, *231*, *239*
assembly sessions, 109
astronomical calendar, *21*

Athenian democracy, *214*, *216*
athletics and gymnastics, *17*, *18*
Atse Susenyos, *112*, *113*
audit of the existing laws, *96*, 172
Ayana, *v*, *89*, *132*, *212*, *214*, *251*
ayyaantuu, *27*, *39*, *45*, *52*, *62*, *94*, *99*, *203*, *251*, *255*

B

Baallii, XIII
Baarentuu, *13*, *38*, *110*, *118*, *140*, *141*, *180*, *183*, *230*, 243
Baissa, *13*, *14*, *39*, *133*, *199*, *200*, *211*, *218*, *224*, *226*, *230*, *251*
balanced opposition, *102*, *103*, 157, 176, 177, *194*, *205*, *210*, *216*
balanced political opposition, *103*
barruu, *213*
Bassi, *24*, 171, *188*, *189*, *251*
Birru, *32*, *251*
Bokku, *112*, 162, *213*, *252*
Bokkuu, *47*, *48*, *63*, *132*, *137*, *149*, *150*, *153*, *154*, 163, *186*, *221*, *222*, *223*, *225*, *226*, *227*, 243
Bonnie K. Holcomb, *228*
Booranaa, *13*, *22*, *38*, *43*, *110*, *118*, *140*, *141*, 174, *180*, *183*, *198*, *220*, *225*, *229*, *230*, *231*, *237*, *239*, 243
Bruce, *39*, *47*, *110*, *222*, *223*, *241*, *252*
Bulcha, *114*, *252*
Bulcha Mekuria, *228*
buttaa, 34
Buttaa, XIII, *26*, *28*, *31*, *33*, *120*, *132*, 156, *182*, *212*, *214*

C

Caffee, XIII, *15*, *27*, *37*, *38*, *40*, *46*, *51*, *52*, *54*, *55*, *56*, *58*, *59*, *60*, *61*, *63*, *64*, *74*, *75*, *87*, *91*, *94*, *95*, *96*, *97*, *104*, 109, *110*, *124*, *138*, *139*, *140*, *141*, *142*, *143*, *144*, *146*, *147*, *148*, *149*, *150*, *152*, 163, 165, 167, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, *184*, *186*, *191*, *192*, *193*, *194*, *196*, *199*, *204*, *205*, *206*, *210*, *223*, *225*, *226*, *227*, *228*, *234*, *241*
Cangaree Korphe, 174
Centenarians, 2
Cerulli, *229*, *252*
Chala, *196*, *199*, *252*
Christian kingdom, *89*, *133*, *215*, *218*, *219*, *235*
chronology, *99*, 155, 158, *205*, *213*, *214*, *218*
Cibraa, 19, 20, 42, 44
communal criminal investigations, *126*
competitive election, *203*
complex riddles, *17*
concept of Gadaa, XV, 154
consociation based decision, *134*
consociationalism, 176, *210*
Consociationalism, *197*
Constitution, *XV*, *31*, *53*, *60*, *87*, *91*, *96*, *128*, *140*, 164, 172, *196*, *204*, *205*, *207*, *211*, *216*, *217*, *225*, *228*
Cooraa, 178, 243
covenant, *106*
crosscutting institutions, *137*
cultural taboo, *69*
Cushitic peoples, *212*

D

D' Abbadie, *39*, *186*, *223*, *224*, *225*, *245*, *252*
D' Abbadie, *58*
Daa'ima, *5*, *9*, *15*, *24*, *25*, *70*, *72*, *85*, 162
daaccii, *100*
Daaccii, *100*, *102*
daanisa, 45
Daannisa, XIII, 10, 23, 26, 45, 70, 74, 75, 86, 88
Dabballee, XIII, 9, 10, 13, 15, 18, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 64, 65, 70, 71, 72, 189
darabaa, *18*
Dargaggoo, *5*, *9*, *20*, *42*, *85*, *150*, 162
Dawwe Gobbo, *97*, 174
Delebo, *112*, *219*, *252*
dhaachiis, *213*, *214*
dhaha, *136*
dhalataa, *113*
dhaloota, *4*, *8*, *9*, *10*, *13*, *16*, *23*, *24*, *27*, *29*, *65*, *68*, *70*, *86*

Dhaloota, XIII, 4, 13, 56, 65, 71, 74
dhaloota period, *4*, *8*, *9*, *13*, *16*, *23*, *24*, *65*
dhoqqee buusuu, *28*
dhoqqee dhaabbachuu, 28
Dhugaa Ganamaa, 166, 169
dhungoo, 17, 20
Dinsa Lepis Aba Jobir, *228*
discontinuity of authority, *102*
Doorii, *10*, *37*, *43*, *45*, *48*, *56*, *58*, *65*, *68*, *70*, *74*, *87*, *153*
Dooroma, *13*, *56*
Dooromaa, 13
Dual moieties, *179*
dual moiety, *118*, *137*, 162, *180*, *181*, *206*, *230*
Dubbisaa, *152*
Duressa, *153*, *253*

E

early born, *9*, *10*, *16*, *25*, *64*, *66*, *68*, *69*, *71*, *76*, *79*, *88*, 178
East Africa, 254, 258
ecosystem, *115*, *117*, *128*, 159
Edmund J. Keller, *228*
Edmund Keller, *229*
eight-year cycle, *135*
eight-year term, *79*, *220*
Eike Haberland, *228*
Élisée Reclus, *226*, *241*
Elmaan, 14
Enrico Cerulli, *228*, *229*
Ethio-Kenya border, *106*
European travelers, XI
executive powers, *185*

F

Fagii, *63*, *153*, *154*
fatherhood ceremony, 45, 51
Finfinnee, *236*, *240*
finna, *54*, *116*, *117*, 157, *193*, 243
Finna, *89*, 116
First *Abbaa Gadaa*, *26*, *27*, *46*, *48*, *52*, *87*, *148*, *151*, *152*, 163, *196*, *223*, *231*, *247*
first-born, *78*
five parties, *79*, *107*, 176, 177, 178, *194*
flagship, 177
Folk-Literature, *229*, *252*
foollee, *19*, *29*, 31, 32, *34*, 35
Foollee, XIII, 13, 19, 26, 29, 32, 33, 34, 189
fooyyee, *39*
free, fair, and frequent election, 175
friendly competition, 178, *181*
full retirement, 2, 40, 64, 75

G

Gaammee gurguddaa, *31*
Gaammee Gurguddaa, *28*, *33*
gaammee hairstyle, *28*
Gaammee Xixiqqaa, 16, *28*
Gada, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 166, 167, 168, 169, 172, 173, 174, 200
Gadaa, XIII, XIV, 121, 127, 253
Gadaa Biifolee, *219*
Gadaa ceremonies, XIV, 22, 124
Gadaa constitution, *XIII*, 44, *59*, *61*, 66, 92, *93*, 97, 99, 105, 107, *132*, *138*, *141*, *142*, *148*, 159, 163, 165, 172, 178, *183*, *191*, 194, 199, 200, 217
Gadaa Constitution, *91*, *110*, *130*, *196*
Gadaa Council, *13*, *34*, *38*, *41*, *47*, *48*, *49*, *53*, *54*, *60*, *62*, *63*, *95*, *98*, *103*, *137*, *144*, *147*, *150*, *151*, *152*, 157, 163, 166, *182*, *183*, *184*, *186*, *191*, *194*, *197*, *199*, *200*, *207*, *219*, *225*, *226*, *231*, *232*, *237*
Gadaa Democracy, *XV*, *101*, *107*, *114*, *117*, 164, 174, 175, 176, *181*, *187*, *188*, *192*, *195*, *197*, *199*, *200*, *205*, *216*, *226*, *230*, *237*, *239*
Gadaa family law, *20*
Gadaa *Garba*, *232*
Gadaa General Assembly, *60*, *148*, *149*, *150*, *152*, *204*

Gadaa government, *XII*, *17*, 20, *22*, *23*, *27*, 28, *31*, 36, 38, 39, *40*, *42*, 43, 44, 46, *48*, *51*, *52*, 53, 54, *58*, *61*, 62, *63*, 64, *75*, *87*, 92, *98*, 99, *101*, 102, 106, 107, *111*, 116, 117, 122, *123*, 125, *138*, *139*, *141*, *143*, *144*, *146*, *148*, *149*, *150*, *152*, *153*, 157, 159, 160, 163, 175, 181, *182*, *184*, *187*, 188, *189*, 190, 191, 192, *193*, *194*, 195, *196*, 197, 199, 200, *201*, *204*, *206*, *207*, *211*, *216*, 217, 218, 219, *220*, *221*, *223*, *224*, *226*, *227*, 230, *231*, 235, *241*
Gadaa Harmuufaa, *6*, *71*, *72*
Gadaa Kiilolee, *219*
Gadaa Malbaa, *6*, *60*, *70*, *71*, *182*, *218*
Gadaa offices, *74*, *75*, *134*, *191*, *203*
Gadaa parties, *2*, *49*, *66*, *88*, *107*, 178, *223*
Gadaa stage, 4, 6, 7, 8, 15, 24, 40, 72, 108, 166, 177, 188, 193, 212, 244
Gadaa System, 121, 253
Gadaa-grades, *XIV*, *1*, *2*, *3*, *4*, *5*, *7*, *8*, *9*, *10*, *12*, *13*, *14*, *15*, *22*, *23*, *24*, *39*, *54*, *57*, *58*, *64*, *65*, *66*, *70*, *72*, *76*, *79*, *81*, *83*, *85*, *86*, *87*, *88*, *92*, *96*, *100*, *103*, *108*, *113*, *137*, *144*, *145*, 155, 159, 162, 176, 177, *181*, *184*, *186*, *187*, *189*, *201*, *206*
Gadamoojjii, *5*, 9, *13*, *14*, *26*, *40*, 64, 65, *71*, *72*, *75*, *85*, *108*, 162, 189, 243
Gadayyoo Galgaloo, 174
Gaheessa, *5*, *9*, *20*, *44*, *85*, *150*, 162
Gamteessa, *9*, *21*, 162
Geda, *32*, *253*
Gemetchu Megersa, *228*
genealogical generation, *XIII*, *1*, *6*, *7*, *14*, *24*, *29*, *30*, *34*, *38*, *66*, *86*, *88*, *108*, *205*
General Assembly, *93*, *95*, *110*, 171
generation of the fathers, *7*, *107*, 156, 177
generation of the sons, *7*, *79*, *80*, 243
generation-sets, *2*, *92*, *102*, *103*, *107*, *135*, *137*, 158, 176, *181*, *186*, *187*, *206*, *208*, *210*
Geshe, *132*, *136*, *253*
Gidada, *33*, *113*, *214*, *225*, *226*, 243, *253*
gita, 17
Gnamo, *238*, *253*
gogeessa, *6*, *8*, *9*, *10*, *27*, 35, *36*, *39*, 42, *43*, *44*, *46*, *48*, *49*, *51*, *53*, *54*, *59*, *60*, *61*, *62*, *70*, *74*, *75*, *79*, 81, *83*, *86*, *87*, *88*, *92*, *100*, *102*, *104*, *107*, *113*, *134*, *143*, *144*, *145*, *148*, *149*, *153*, 158, 162, 163, 176, 177, 178, 179, *181*, *187*, *188*, *189*, *190*, *193*, *194*, *197*, *202*, *204*, *205*, *206*, *207*, *210*, *216*, *223*, *232*, *233*, *238*, *244*
Gogeessa, XIII
Gooba ceremony, *190*
gosa, 156, 178, *181*
Gosa, XIII
government by Council, *98*
greater orators, 172
guddifachaa, *112*
Gududuu, 10, 15, 16, *21*, 25, *60*, *64*, 71, 140, 199, 224, *225*, *241*
Gujii, XI, *21*, *28*, *43*, *63*, *64*, *153*, *199*, *213*, *222*, *234*, *237*, *239*
Gumii, *60*, *104*, *141*, *146*, 171, *192*, *237*
Gurbaa, 5, 14
guutuu, *40*, *50*
Guutuu, 40, 41

H

Haadha Bokkuu, *186*
Haadha Gadaa, *201*
Haawaxa, *232*
Halakhe Doyyo, *192*
hangafa, *78*
Haruu Marruu, 174
Hassen, *53*, *58*, *253*
hayuu Raabaa, 61
hayyuu, *4*, *19*, *20*, *23*, *26*, *29*, *31*, *35*, *36*, *38*, *39*, *40*, *41*, *42*, *43*, *45*, *46*, *53*, *54*, *61*, *62*, *63*, *74*, *76*, *87*, *91*, *92*, *94*, *95*, *102*, 109, *113*, *137*, *138*, *139*, *144*, *145*, *147*, *148*, *149*, *150*, *151*, *152*, *154*, 162, 163, 167, 172, *185*, *191*, *193*, *194*, *203*, *232*, *233*, *238*
hayyuu Aduulaa, *37*, *38*, *148*, *233*
hayyuu Garbaa, *63*, *137*, *151*, *152*
hayyuu gosa, *36*, *144*, *145*
hayyuu Guudda, *147*

hayyuu Kuusaa, *40*, *42*, *46*
Hayyuu Meddhichaa, *151*, *231*, *232*, *233*
hayyuu Qondaalaa, 39, 40, 46
hayyuu *Raabaa*, 42, 43, 46
heera, *91*, *92*, *136*, 163, 165, *194*, *210*
Heera, XIII, 192, 217
Herbert Lewis, *228*
hereditary and elective leadership, *101*
Heritage of Humanity, *239*, *240*
Hidoto, *209*, *253*
Hinew, *32*, *41*, *133*, *135*, *136*, *137*, 164, *212*, *214*, *254*
hiriyaa, 17, 18, 19, 20
Hiriyaa, XIII, 4, 18, 19, 89, 104, 138, 142, 145, 150, 181, 182, 203
hiriyaa Council, *86*, *145*
Hiriyaa Councils, *150*
Hoboo, 178, 244
Holcomb, *134*, *210*, *254*
horizontal institutions, *137*
Horn of Africa, *135*, 164, *209*, *212*, *215*, *234*, *235*, *238*, *254*, 257
horooroo, 64
Houston, *212*, *254*
human civilizations, *135*
Humbanaa, XI, 48, 58, 228

I

ideologies, 177, 178, *239*
Idossa, *32*, *254*
Ijoollee, *5*, *9*, *15*, *16*, *17*, *28*, *72*, *85*, 162
ilaa fi ilaamee, 169
Ilaaa-fi-ilaamee, XIII
ilaamee and ilaa, 109
ilmaan dhalootaa, *66*
ilmaan Jaarsaa, *27*, *63*, *66*, *70*, *72*, *78*, *79*
ilmaan kormaa, *66*, *72*
Irreechaa, *123*, *124*
Irreesaa, XIII
Irreessaa, *137*, *153*, *154*
Islamic principalities, *133*
itti makoo, *7*, *29*, *30*
Itti makoo, XIII, 29
Ittimakoo, XIII, 9, 13, 15, *17*, *19*, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, *32*, 34, 57, 58, 61, 63, 65, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 85, 87, 108, 152, 162
Ituu, XI, 28, 48, 58, 112, 180, 199, 222, 225, 226, 227, 228, 234, 237, 241

J

jaarsummaa, *184*
jaarraa, *65*, *99*, 155
Jaarraa, *21*, *213*
Jaarsa, *5*, *9*, *21*, *22*, *23*, *36*, *43*, *64*, *65*, *85*, *125*, *137*, *138*, 162, 167
Jaarsummaa, *23*, 167
Jabaa Waraanaa, *145*, *219*
Jalata, *116*, *118*, *123*, *180*, *209*, *210*, *212*, *214*, 243, *251*, *254*, *255*, *256*
James Bruce, 221
jilaa, *122*
Jirata, *7*, *255*
Joao Bermudez, *219*
John Hinnat, *228*
judiciary power, *184*, *185*
junior moieties, *14*, *38*, *181*, *198*
jury, *153*, 167, *185*

K

kaawoo, *106*, *115*, *117*, 154, *236*
kallachaa, 64, 122
Karl Eric Knutsson, *228*
Karrayyuu, XI, 43, 49, 55, 102, 189, 190, 196, 199, 213, 222, 234, 237, 243, 244
Kassa, *153*, *232*, *233*, *249*, *255*
Kedir, 160, *212*, *255*
Kelbessa, *153*, *255*
Keller, *255*
Kenea, *60*, *256*
Keneni, *125*, *256*
Kenya, *XI*, *XV*, *22*, *46*, *60*, *105*, *106*, *118*, *136*, *138*, *141*, *150*, *213*, *217*, *220*, *226*, *231*, *237*, *238*, *239*, *241*
kinship, *59*, *107*, *112*, *113*, *141*, 178, *179*, *180*, *183*, *187*, *188*, *194*
kinship structure, *183*, *187*, *188*
Kontoma, *183*, *231*, *232*
kooluu, *113*, *114*
Koonnoo, *232*, *233*
Kusaa, 20

Kuusa, *XIII*, *9*, *13*, *20*, *26*, *29*, *32*, *38*, *39*, *40*, *41*, *42*, *51*, *63*, *68*, *72*, *85*, *108*, 162, *182*, *184*, *189*

L

Lallaba, 40
Lata, *132*, *211*, *213*, *214*, *256*
late born, *9*, *10*, *15*, *62*, *63*, *64*, *69*, *70*, *71*, *72*, *79*, *88*, 178
late initiate, *76*, *77*
Lateral Council, *137*, *151*, *231*, *232*
Legesse, *IX*, *XV*, *5*, *46*, *60*, *66*, *89*, *92*, *93*, *96*, *97*, *99*, *100*, *101*, *102*, *103*, *105*, *110*, *118*, *128*, *135*, *145*, *150*, *151*, 154, 161, 162, 164, 169, 177, *179*, *180*, *188*, *189*, *192*, *195*, *196*, *206*, *209*, *212*, *217*, *218*, *223*, *229*, *230*, *232*, *233*, *237*, *239*, *244*, *256*
Lemmu Baissa, *228*
Levine, *IX*, *228*, *229*, *256*
limited government, *134*, 157, 175
Lobo, *220*, *256*
luba, *6*, *27*, *29*, *34*, *62*, *94*, 178
Luba, XI, XIII, 3, 5, 7, *8*, 9, 10, 13, 16, 20, 22, 24, 26, 27, 28, 30, 33, 39, 40, 42, 43, 44, 46, 48, 50, 51, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 80, 83, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 94, 96, 100, 107, 108, *123*, 125, 145, 146, 149, 150, 152, 153, 155, 156, 162, 163, 166, 176, 177, 182, 188, 189, 190, 193, 194, 200, 201, 203, 204, 205, 206, *212*, 217, *218*, 220, 221, 224, 225, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 238, 241, 243, 244

M

Maanguddoo, *5*, *9*, *22*, *23*, *85*, 162
Maccaa, XI, 13, 15, 22, 31, 32, 38, 48, 52, 58, 59, 60, 63, 70, 97, 110, 113, 118, 140, 141, 142, 153, 154, 174, 177, 180, 183, 186, 198, 199, 222, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 234, 237, 241, 243
Makko Bili, 174, 243
Mako Bili, *97*, 243
Mamo, *32*, *153*, *256*
Manbadha, *60*, *142*, *146*, *258*
mandatory membership, 178
man-made *law*, *96*, 157
man-made laws, *96*, 169, 170
Maq-baasa, XIII, 23, 26, 27, 58, 70, 74, 75, 76, 88
Marco Bassi, *228*
Marcus, *209*, *257*
Marko Bassi, 229
marriage ritual, *69*
Maxxaarii, *28*
maxxaarrii, *6*, *29*, *30*, *31*, *70*, *71*, *72*, *76*, *77*, *78*, *79*, *80*, *88*
Maxxaarrii, XIII, 30
measurement of time, *99*
Meddhicha, *63*, *197*, *231*, *232*
meedhachaa, *113*, *114*
meedhachaa ceremony, *114*
Megerssa, *116*, *132*, *213*, *214*, *245*
Melba, *257*
mid-term evaluation, *74*, *75*, *191*
Military readiness, *20*
miseensa, *37*, *38*, *39*, *42*, *46*, *48*, *51*, *59*, *63*, *86*, *94*, *95*, *101*, *185*, *230*
Miseensa, XIII
modern bureaucracy, *184*
modern civil service, *184*
moggaasaa, *111*, *112*, *113*
Mole, *137*, *257*
monopoly of state power, *181*
mootii, *179*, *227*
Mucaa, *5*, *14*, *15*
Muhammed Hassen, *228*
Muudaa, *40*, *52*, *104*, *122*, *123*, *137*, *143*, *144*, 163, *196*

N

naftagna, *236*
nagaa, *114*, *115*, *117*, *134*
nagaa Oromoo, *114*, *115*
namesake, *3*, *13*
National Council, *15*, *200*
natural governments, 177
nyaachisa, *26*, *33*

O

Odaa, XIV
Ollaa Arbooraa, *220*, *231*
Oral traditions, 166, *241*, 243
orderly succession, *203*
Oromo, XII, XIII, XIV, 41, 121, 127, 229, 252, 254, 257
Oromo communities, *7*, *17*, *19*, *22*, *25*, *39*, *52*, *59*, *60*, *64*, *65*, *87*, *123*, *128*, *133*, *142*, *144*, *145*, *154*, 178, *179*, *186*, *198*, *211*, *215*, *222*, *227*, *237*, *239*
Oromo democracy, *92*, *103*, 160, 173, 174, 175, 178, *194*, *198*, *210*, *217*, 230, *240*, *244*, *256*
Oromo Dream, *115*
Oromo justice system, *186*
Oromo maxim, *128*
Oromo monarchies, *198*, *225*, *227*
Oromo philosophy, *18*, *41*
Oromo polities, *10*, *29*, *30*, *38*, *55*, *78*, *188*, *228*, *231*
Oromo polity, *27*, *38*, *60*, *102*, *105*, *143*, *144*, *145*, *146*, *154*, 156, 162, 178, 179, *181*, *185*, *206*, *207*
Oromo society, *4*, *16*, *23*, *41*, *44*, *86*, *92*, *94*, *113*, *114*, *116*, *123*, *133*, 155, 165, 169, 176, *180*, *181*, *210*, 243
Oromo worldview, *105*, *136*
Oromummaa, *136*, *137*, *236*, 255
Orthodox Christianity, *235*
osculating lover, *42*
overall reconciliation, *186*
overstay, 62

P

pan-Oromo assembly, *15*, *59*, *110*, *138*, *184*
passage rites, XIV, 33, 57, 86, 108
period of testing, *100*
philosophical reasoning, 44
physical training, *17*, *41*
pilgrimage, *144*, *253*
Plowden, *225*, *241*, *257*
political campaign, *100*
political darkness, *210*
political outlooks, *79*
political powers, *201*, *211*
political risk, *188*
polity, *XI*, *2*, *19*, *22*, *28*, *32*, *38*, *39*, *40*, *43*, *44*, *48*, *49*, *51*, *52*, *55*, *59*, *61*, *63*, *68*, *76*, *77*, *79*, *87*, *92*, *119*, *136*, *137*, *138*, *139*, *140*, *141*, *143*, *144*, *146*, *148*, *149*, *151*, 156, 157, 179, *183*, *184*, *185*, *188*, *195*, *200*, *203*, *204*, *205*, *206*, *216*, *223*, *225*, *230*, *232*
polysepalous, *195*, *206*, *210*, *240*
polysepalous government, *210*
popular democracy, *IX*, *204*, *210*, *216*, *217*
population explosion, *135*
Portuguese missionaries, *220*
power transfer, 46, 51, 52, 134, 188
power-sharing, *183*, *188*, *234*
principle of representation, *110*

Q

Qaalluu, XIII, XIV, *27*, 34, *36*, 39, *40*, 45, 52, 94, 96, *101*, *102*, *104*, *111*, 118, *122*, *125*, 137, 142, 143, 144, 146, 148, 163, 167, 169, 176, 180, 181, 184, 186, 195, *196*, *199*, 207, *227*, *230*
qadaddu and walanna, *102*
qadadduu, *102*
Qeerroo, *4*, *5*, *9*, *17*, *18*, *19*, 20, *34*, 41, *72*, *85*, *103*, 162
Qixxee, *105*, *121*, 167
qixxummaa, *136*, *204*
qomoo, *38*, *114*, *184*
Qondaala, XIII, XIV, 9, 13, 19, 24, 26, 28, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 49, 51, 57, 61, 62, 63, 74, 76, 85, 87, 103, 108, 148, 162, 182, 184, 189, 191, 203
qooddaa dhalootaa, *107*
qooddaa umurii, *108*
Qorannoo, *244*
qumbii, 64

R

Raaba, *XIII*, XIV, *3*, *6*, *9*, *10*, *13*, *16*, *20*, *24*, *26*, *29*, *37*, *39*, *40*, *41*, *42*, *43*, *44*, *45*, *46*, *48*, *51*, *53*, *54*, *56*, *57*, *58*, *61*, *63*, *65*, *68*, *70*, *72*, *74*, *78*, *85*, *87*, *100*, *108*, *123*, *148*, *153*, 156, 162, 167, *182*, *184*, *188*, *189*, *190*
Raaba Doorii, *10*, *13*, *26*, *43*, *45*, *51*, *53*, *56*, *58*, *61*, *63*, *65*, *148*, *188*
Raabaa stage, 43, 49, 54
Raayyaa, 118
rakoo, *63*, *68*, *69*, *78*, *127*, *143*, *186*
rakoo wife, *68*, *69*, *78*, *143*
Rakoo wife, *201*
rational arguments, *192*
reaching consensus, 173, *198*
Reclus, *2*, *40*, *227*, *241*, *257*
reconciliation, *37*, *64*, *65*, *125*, *134*, 173, *184*, *186*, *196*
Red Sea, 254, 257
republic, *210*, *224*, *230*, *241*
republican democracy, XIII
republican form of government, *IX*, *204*, *210*, *216*, *217*, *220*, *227*, *237*, *240*, *241*, *242*
republican principles, *226*
republicanism, *IX*, 159, *204*, *210*, *219*, *225*
right birth, *66*
right born, *XV*, *9*, *10*, *13*, *15*, *18*, *21*, *24*, *25*, *27*, *28*, *29*, *35*, *45*, *46*, *56*, *57*, *66*, *69*, *70*, *71*, *72*, *74*, *76*, *77*, *79*, *88*, *108*, 178, *189*, *203*
rightful age, *71*
ritual feast, *26*, *33*, *120*
Roggee, 5
rule of law, *133*, *134*, 157, 165, 169, 175, *210*, *238*
ruling Gadaa, *152*
ruufoo, 52, 54, 122

S

Sadachaa, *140*, *199*
saddeeqa, *16*
safuu, 31, *53*, *61*, *117*, *136*, 154, 157, 163, 165, *192*, *204*
Safuu, XIV, 37, 115, 117, 118, 166, 169
saphaloo, 39, 62, 172
Schlee, *181*, *239*, *258*
secular offices, *101*
seera, *91*, *92*, *96*, *136*, 157, 163, 165, 166, 169, 170, 172, 173, *194*, *210*
Seera, XIV
seera baasuu, 171, 172
seera rakoo, *127*, 166
seera tumaa, 157, 165, 166, 169, 170
self-rule, *133*, *199*, *230*
separation of powers, *104*, 157, 163, *184*
shadow government, 163, *183*, *188*, *197*, *231*
Shadow government, *102*
siiqqee, 127
Siiqqee, *127*, *186*, *201*
Siiqqee Assembly, *127*
Siiqqee institution, *186*
single term of office, *79*
Sirna, 155, 160, 177, *204*, *211*, *212*, *213*, *214*, *257*, *258*
Sirna Gadaa, 155
sirrisa, 35
Sisai Ibssa, *228*
skill training, *17*
social stratification, *107*, *118*, 176, *180*, *181*, *186*, *187*, *194*, *210*
sovereignty of the people, *134*, 157, 175
spiritual services, *101*
staggered succession, *3*, *6*, *9*, *10*, *13*, *16*, *26*, *27*, *38*, 43, *46*, 51, *54*, *55*, *56*, *57*, *61*, *62*, *63*, *64*, *67*, *70*, *71*, *72*, *77*, *79*, *81*, *87*, 101, 102, *108*, *145*, *148*, 157, 188, *189*, *190*, *191*, 206
Staggered succession, *10*, *55*, *57*, *58*, *206*
subordination of warriors, *95*
succession, *79*, *99*, *102*, 163, 179, *188*, *205*
Sultanate of Adal, *133*, *219*, *235*
Suluda, *28*
supremacy of the law, *94*, 169, *210*
supreme authority, *97*, 163
system of representation, 175

T

Taboree, *17*
Tafla, 169, 171, *220*, *226*, *258*
Tarree Luugoo, *56*, *189*
Teso, *142*, *258*
Tessema Ta'a, *228*
Thanksgiving, *123*
the first among equals, *98*
tokkummaa, *106*, *136*, *204*
tolfata biyyaa, *39*, *40*
Torbicha, *21*
traditional administrative structure, *184*, *185*
traditional medicine, *21*, *41*
tripartite organization, 157
Tufaa, *153*, *154*
Tuulamaa, XI, 13, 15, 31, 32, 38, 60, 63, 70, 78, 141, 154, 174, 180, 183, 186, 199, 222, 225, 226, 234, 237

U

ulmaa, *39*
UNESCO, *240*, *242*
universal male suffrage, *131*
USA, *IX*, *92*, *101*, *124*, 175, *209*, *216*, *217*, *230*, *252*, *255*, *256*

V

Verharen, *258*
vertical distribution of powers, 176, *187*, *208*, *210*
Vertical institutions, *137*

W

Waaqa, XIV, 25, *26*, 28, *37*, *94*, *111*, *115*, *117*, *123*, *124*, 125, 159, 165, 169, 174, *205*
Waaqeffannaa, *124*, 159, 243
walabummaa, *132*, *136*, *204*, *216*
wal-dandeettii, *136*, *204*
Wal-dandeettii, 119
wal-dhaggii, 35
Walee Waccuu, *192*
wal-qixxummaa, *136*, *204*
Walter C. Plowden, *224*, *226*, *241*
warra, *38*, *114*, *184*, *208*
Western democracy, *135*, 175, *197*, *198*, *210*, *242*
written records, *203*, *207*

Y

yaa'ii, *192*
Yuba I, *3*, *5*, *9*, *10*, *13*, *16*, *22*, *26*, *28*, *53*, *54*, *56*, *57*, *58*, *61*, *62*, *64*, *68*, *74*, *75*, *85*, *87*, *108*, 162, *188*, *189*, 243
Yuba II, *5*, *9*, *13*, *22*, *24*, *26*, *35*, *57*, *62*, *63*, *68*, *74*, *83*, *85*, *108*, 162, *189*
Yuba III, *9*, *13*, *26*, *63*, *69*, *74*, *85*, *108*, 162, *189*
Yuba IV, *9*, *13*, *26*, *61*, *63*, *69*, *74*, *83*, *85*, *108*, *153*, 162, *189*

Z

Zelamem Tesfaye Sirna, *228*